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12 Buddhist Murmurs? – Another Look at the Composition of the *Gōngsūn Lóngzǐ*

This chapter follows the research of A. C. Graham (1919–1991) and Shěn Yǒudǐng 沈有鼎 (1908–1993) on the textual history of the *Gōngsūn Lóngzǐ* 公孫龍子 (hereafter *GSLZ*). After a few introductory remarks in the first section, the second section illustrates the secondary nature of the *GSLZ* by giving a concise overview of the various ways its compilers drew on the “dialectical chapters” of the *Mòzǐ* (Mohist ‘Canons’). In the third section, I gather evidence for the medieval renaissance of Mohist dialectics, which was closely associated with the figure of Gōngsūn Lóng from its beginning, in order to suggest that it was in the light of this renewed interest in language and argument that the extant *GSLZ* was composed. If the *GSLZ* is indeed as late as this, its compilation would coincide with a period during which Buddhist scholastics enjoyed increasing influence in China. Thus the main part of the chapter is dedicated to disclosing traces of a Buddhist impact on the argument, structure, and compilation of the *GSLZ*, or some of its parts. Even if the *GSLZ* lacks manifest traces of Buddhist influence, such as quotations of Buddhist works or explicitly Buddhist terminology, there is evidence to suggest that a strong Buddhist background informed the compiler(s) of the work. In section four, I show that the argument in the ‘Discourse on Hard and White’ (Jiānbái lùn 堅白論, hereafter JBL) closely resembles a line of reasoning in a Buddhist work translated in the early fifth century CE. In section five, I demonstrate how certain Buddhist discourses about the nature of causation, time, and language provide the very rationale that structures the ‘Discourse on Penetrating Change’ (Tōngbiàn lùn 通變論, hereafter TBL) and the ‘Discourse on Names and Substances’ (Míngshí lùn 名實論, hereafter MSL). The sixth section explores the composition of JBL and its pivotal role in the compilation of the entire *GSLZ* from the perspective of three of its crucial terms and their probable Buddhist implications. Section seven returns to Graham’s and Shěn’s arguments for dating the composition of the received *GSLZ* as late as in the second half of the seventh century CE. On the basis of various Buddhist references, this section attempts to gain additional insights into the possible history of compilation of the *GSLZ*. The peculiar nature of the parallels in Buddhist texts, along with internal evidence in JBL and TBL, suggest that the *GSLZ* – and especially these two chapters – possibly assumed their present shape through two different stages of editorial activity, in the fifth and the late seventh centuries CE, respectively.

1 Introduction

Doubts regarding the “authenticity” or, in somewhat less biased diction, the pre-imperial composition of the *GSLZ* harken back well into the late imperial period. Between its first mention in the bibliographical section of the *Hànshū* 漢書 (The History of the Former Hàn),¹ completed in 110 CE, and its reappearance in the *Jiù Táng shū* 舊唐書 (The Older History of the Táng), compiled in the period of the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms, 907–960 CE,² the *GSLZ* is conspicuously absent from official bibliographies for almost a millennium. As early as the seventeenth century, this led the bibliophile and textual scholar Yáo Jìhéng 姚際恆 (1647–c. 1715) to question the authenticity of the text.³ The modern scholar Huáng Yúnmei 黃雲眉 (1898–1977) reaffirmed these misgivings in an updated and extended edition of Yáo’s work.⁴ To be sure, Yáo’s verdict, which was based exclusively on the absence of the *GSLZ* from the Suí 隋 (581–618) imperial catalogue, struck Bernard Karlgren (1889–1978) as so unconvincing that he chose this particular case as a warning against the indiscriminate use of the traditional method of authenticating texts on the basis of their uninterrupted presence in subsequent bibliographical lists.⁵ Nonetheless, the situation has changed considerably since Yáo’s time, and the evidence suggesting a late date of composition for at least parts of the *GSLZ* has increased and has in fact become overwhelming in the course of the twentieth century. The philological restoration of the *Mòzǐ* 墨子 by scholars such as Bì Yuán 畢沅 (1730–1797),⁶ Sūn

1 *Hànshū*, ‘Yìwénzhì’: “*Gōngsūn Lóngzǐ* in fourteen [bamboo] bundles” (公孫龍子十四篇), in Liú 1955: 32.

2 *Jiù Tángshū*, ‘Jīngjì zhì’, j. 47, ‘míngjiā’: “*Gōngsūn Lóngzǐ* in three [silk] scrolls/fascicles. Written by Gōngsūn Lóng; with the commentary of Jiǎ Dàiyīn in one scroll, and the commentary of Chén Sīgǔ in one scroll” (公孫龍子三卷。公孫龍撰。又一卷賈大隱注，又一卷陳嗣古注), in Liú 1975: 2031.

3 On this topic, see e.g. Graham 1956/7: 168.

4 See his *Gǔ jīn wěishū bǔzhèng* 古今僞書補證 (Additional Evidence on Forged Books from Antiquity to the Present), in Huáng 1972. See also Shěn 1992c (1989): 333, cf. 444.

5 “The method [of inferring from gaps in the continuous record of a text in subsequent bibliographies that it is a forgery (R.S.)] must be handled with care. The following example is given as a warning. Concerning the philosopher *Kung-sun Lung-tsi* Yao Tsi-heng (p. 22a) says: ‘It is recorded in the *Han chǐ* [...] but not in the *Suei chǐ* [...]; what doubt can there be that it is spurious?’ We again find the Kung-sun Lung-tsi already in the *Kiu T’ang shu* bibliography, so that Yao’s verdict is based on its absence in *one* ancient catalogue! There is nothing astonishing in the fact that, in the work of one man, among hundreds of book titles one has been skipped”; Karlgren 1929: 168.

6 Published in a punctuated version by Wú Xùnmín 吳旭民 in 1995. See Bì 1995: 140–163.

Yìràng 孫詒讓 (1848–1908),⁷ and Liáng Qǐchāo 梁啟超 (1873–1929)⁸ has allowed us to determine more precisely the nature of the striking similarities and textual overlaps between the so-called “dialectical chapters” (chapters 40–44) of the book and large parts of the extant *GSLZ*. Based on the findings of these scholars, the eminent British sinologist A. C. Graham and the logician and intellectual historian Shěn Yǒudǐng have presented a wealth of evidence to prove the medieval origin of most of the materials transmitted in the received *GSLZ*. Their detailed investigations into its relation to the dialectical chapters of the *Mòzǐ* leave little room for doubt that three of the five extant chapters of the *GSLZ* draw heavily on the Mohist ‘Canons’. A considerable number of passages is directly copied from that source, while others are modeled on this Mohist precedent.⁹ The focus and the limits of the present chapter do not allow for an exhaustive discussion of these cases of borrowing and imitation,¹⁰ and I will restrict my presentation to a handful of unquestionable examples that illustrate how the *GSLZ* adopts and emulates materials from the ‘Canons’.

The core of the present chapter will concentrate on a different problem: in spite of the fact that there are no *obvious* references in the *GSLZ* to Buddhist texts, whether terminological borrowings or quotations from specific texts, there are three peculiarities of the text which I consider indicative of a Buddhist influence on (1) the argument, (2) the structure, and (3) the composition of parts of the extant *GSLZ*. First, the main line of argument about the relationship between perception and conception in the Mohist-inspired JBL resembles a similar argument presented in the Buddhist *Chéngshílùn* 成實論 (**Satyasiddhi-śāstra*/**Tattvasiddhiśāstra*, Śāstra on the Establishment of Truth¹¹), translated

7 *Mòzǐ Xiángǔ* 墨子閒詁 (Casual Notes on the *Mòzǐ*), in Sūn 1978 (1936): 190–242.

8 Liáng 1989 (1920).

9 The “dialectical chapters” are chapters 40–41, the so-called ‘*jīng*’ 經 (‘Canons’), together with chapters 42–43, the corresponding ‘*shuō*’ 說 (‘Explanations’). I will collectively – and admittedly somewhat imprecisely – refer to these as the “Mohist Canons” in what follows. There are good reasons to include the subsequent chapters 44–45 (‘*Dàqǔ*’ 大取 and ‘*Xiǎoqǔ*’ 小取 [“Major” and “Minor Selections”, which Graham refers to as “Greater Pick” and “Smaller Pick”]), which – just like parts of chapters 40–43 – are also concerned with language and argumentation, that is, with what since the twentieth century has come to be referred to as ancient Chinese “logic” (for a critical perspective on the assignment of this attribute to the “dialectical chapters”, see Kurtz 2011). The *jīng* are terse and highly condensed “guidelines” or even “principles”, while the *shuō* are usually the corresponding illustrations or further specifications, rather than explanations in a narrow sense.

10 For a more comprehensive discussion, see Suter, forthcoming.

11 Lambert Schmithausen has argued that the Sanskrit title was **Tattvasiddhi* rather than **Satyasiddhi* (cf. Krause 2003: 17), and Whalen Lai suggested that this title had no equivalent

into Chinese in 412 CE,¹² to a degree which strongly suggests that it may have been composed, if not directly on the basis of this text, at least quite probably under the influence of scholarship related to this Buddhist treatise, which seems to have enjoyed a scholarly reception well beyond Buddhist circles, notably (and not least) as a manual for the art of disputation.¹³

Second, apart from JBL, textual overlaps that result from the integration and imitation of materials from the ‘Canons’ up to a length of a dozen continuous characters accumulate in clearly delimited sections of the *GSLZ*. This results in a distinctive pattern which contrasts these passages with the remaining parts of the book: the sections that consist almost entirely of material taken from the ‘Canons’ alternate with passages that have no apparent relation to the *Mòzǐ*. This can be observed both in MSL and in TBL. Arguably, both texts contain long sections adopted from other ancient sources – the passage on “left and right” in the former,¹⁴ and the discussion about the relation between ‘things’ (*wù* 物), ‘substances’ or ‘actualities’ (*shí* 實), and ‘names’ (*míng* 名) in the latter – which they link with materials from the ‘Canons’. Strikingly, neither of these chapters offers an explanation which would allow us to link these consecutive but seemingly unrelated parts. However, as soon as they are read against the backdrop of Buddhist discussions that seem to have reached China from the fourth century CE onward, the ostensibly arbitrary arrangement of the texts becomes comprehensible. This strongly suggests that these chapters were composed under the influence of these Buddhist discourses. If this is true, the Mohist-inspired chapters of the *GSLZ* cannot have been composed prior to the medieval period, even though the ‘Canons’ from which they so heavily draw were possibly corrupted into incomprehensibility as early as in the first century BCE.¹⁵

Third, both Graham and Shěn have argued that the extant version of the *GSLZ* was only composed in the early decades of the Táng period – that is, as late as in the seventh century CE. Apart from the observation of Early Táng taboos in the doxographical ‘Jífǔ’ 跡府 chapter (Storehouse of Traces, hereafter JF), their argument crucially hinges on their assessment of the ephemeral appearance of a so-called *Discourse on Preserving White* (Shǒubái lùn 守白論),

in Sanskrit, but was in fact an innovation introduced by Kumārajīva (Chin. Jiūmóluóshí 鳩摩羅什, 343–413), who translated the text into Chinese; see Lai 1978: 340.

¹² One source gives 406 CE as an alternative date. In his detailed study, Krause argues that the evidence supports the later date (411–412 CE); see Krause 2003: 37–44.

¹³ Krause 2003: 143. This may be related to the form of the treatise as a dispute which establishes its own position in a series of refutations of contrary views; cf. Krause 2003: 17.

¹⁴ Graham 1965: 150–152; Shěn 1992a: 507; Shěn 1992c (1989): 446.

¹⁵ Graham 1978: 65.

which was attributed to Gōngsūn Lóng for a short period of time at the turn from the Suí (581–618) to the Táng 唐 (618–907) dynasties and identified by some scholars with the *GSLZ*. While both Graham and Shěn accept this equation, they refuse the corollary implied by scholars such as Mei Yi-Pao 梅貽寶 (Méi Yībǎo, 1900–1997) and Wáng Guǎn 王琯 (Wáng Xiàntáng 王獻唐, 1896–1960), who further posited a continuity between the *Discourse on Preserving White* and the *GSLZ*, as listed in the second-century CE *Hànshū*.¹⁶ Shěn more specifically suggests that the *Discourse on Preserving White* and the *Discourse on White and Horse* (Báimǎ lùn 白馬論) were two different texts, which were likewise attributed to Gōngsūn Lóng, but which circulated independently of each other. If Shěn is right, we might question why a purported seventh-century compiler of our extant *GSLZ* would not only have taken these two books together, but why he additionally complemented his work by including the highly obscure ‘Discourse on Pointing Things’ (Zhǐwù lùn 指物論, hereafter ZWL). The present chapter argues that the terminological interrelation between JBL, ZWL, and BML hints at a Buddhist background that may have encouraged this peculiar way of connecting them. Moreover, it proposes that even the combination of these three texts with MSL and their inclusion in the same collection might have been inspired by one particular Buddhist text.

In order to substantiate these admittedly daring claims, the present chapter will proceed in several steps. In the following section, I will present several instructive examples which illustrate the adoption and reinterpretation of chunks of the Mohist ‘Canons’ in the *GSLZ*. This shows that its compilers must have used a written, corrupted version of the ‘Canons’, and that the recontextualization of Mohist fragments in several instances forced the compilers to fundamentally reinterpret the original Mohist notions.

In the third section, I will provide a short discussion of the largely elusive Mohist renaissance, which is only palpable in a few scattered textual witnesses from the medieval period, most famously in Lǚ Shèng’s 魯勝 late third-century CE *Preface to a Commentary on the Mohist Disputations* (Xù Mòbiàn zhù 敘墨辯注). A closer look at this piece reveals considerable terminological affinities with the ‘Gōngsūn Lóng’ chapter of the *Kǒngcóngzǐ* 孔叢子¹⁷ – a collection of

¹⁶ Wáng Guǎn 1992: 9–10; Mei 1953: 408–409.

¹⁷ Yoav Ariel remarks that the *Kǒngcóngzǐ* was “in all likelihood” compiled by the early third-century CE scholar Wáng Sù 王肅 (195–256) or someone in his milieu (Ariel 1989: 4). He considers it a traditionalist Confucian polemic against the contemporary florescence of rival schools, most prominently “dark learning” (*xuánxué* 玄學), and he also explicitly mentions the Mohists and the partisans of the “School of Names” (p. 5). In his review of the book, A. C. Graham questions Ariel’s dating, not least by referring to one of Ariel’s strongest pieces

anecdotic accounts of the life and teachings of the debater, which also contains what is arguably the most elaborate among early attempts to analyze his dictum of the white horse, provided we exclude the dubious *GSLZ* itself from consideration. The close association of Mohism with the figure of Gōngsūn Lóng is equally attested in a passage from the late third or early fourth century CE *Lièzǐ* 列子,¹⁸ in which two out of seven theses attributed to the pre-imperial debater are actually taken from the Mohist ‘Canons’ – a fact already recognized by the early medieval commentator Zhāng Zhàn 張湛 (late fourth century CE).¹⁹ The admittedly scarce evidence of a Mohist revival from the late third century CE onward, along with its strong connection to the figure of Gōngsūn Lóng, suggests that those chapter sections of the *GSLZ* which are based on the *Mòzǐ* are also a product of this time.

In the fourth section, I shall present a short sketch of the main arguments of JBL, the *GSLZ* chapter which is most obviously based on the model of the ‘Canons’. I shall contrast this sketch with a couple of arguments transmitted in the *Chéngshìlùn*, which was translated into Chinese in the early fifth century CE.²⁰ Based on this comparison, it will become clear that some of the arguments collected in the Buddhist *śāstra* bear a striking resemblance to those presented in JBL. The texts are similar to a degree that makes one wonder whether the latter was in fact construed on the model of the former – intentionally crafted in more archaic language. Given the fact that the *Chéngshìlùn* dominated large parts of the intellectual scene even beyond narrow Buddhist circles throughout much of the fifth and early sixth centuries CE, this does not seem unlikely *a priori*.

In the fifth section, I will show that TBL and MSL offer their readers virtually no indication as to how to correlate their different sections, which are clearly set apart from each other in terms of stylistic features and intertextual references. Some of them draw heavily on the Mohist ‘Canons’, while the rest do not. And although at least TBL explicitly claims an analogical relationship that is said to interconnect its three thematically distinct parts, the underlying

of evidence, namely the peculiar and distinctly late formulation of the “white horse” sophism (*bái mǎ fēi bái mǎ* 白馬非白馬 [“white horse is not white horse”] vs. common *bái mǎ fēi mǎ* 白馬非馬 [“white horse is not horse”]); see Graham 1990b: 572–573.

¹⁸ For the date of the *Lièzǐ*, see Graham 1960/1: 141–143; Barrett 1993: 299–301.

¹⁹ In his commentary on the explanation of Gōngsūn Lóng’s thesis that “a shadow does not move because it is replaced” (影不移者說在改也) in *Lièzǐ*, Zhāng Zhàn 張湛 points to a largely identical formulation in the *Mòzǐ* (墨子曰影不移說在改為也); see Zhāng 1978: 48. Likewise, regarding the thesis that “a hair will draw a weight of thousand *jūn*” (髮引千鈞), he remarks that the *Mòzǐ* “also has this explanation” (墨子亦有此說); see Zhāng 1978: 48; cf. Graham 1960: 89.

²⁰ The translation was overseen by Kumārajīva and conducted in Cháng’ān, which was then the capital of the Later Qín 秦 dynasty (384–412 CE).

principle that is supposed to bridge the obvious caesuras that divide the Mohist-influenced paragraphs from sections which apparently draw on other materials remains largely obscure from an intratextual perspective. Only by turning to Buddhist translations from the fifth through the sixth centuries CE, which discuss a number of peculiar correlative terms, do we find that it is precisely these stock examples which surface in subsequent sections of the *GSLZ* chapters under investigation here, and which thus seem to provide the very rationale for connecting them. This strongly suggests that the editors who assembled the respective *GSLZ* chapters were guided by Buddhist models they adopted – whether consciously or not.

The sixth section will then start from the key role JBL seems to play in inter-connecting at least three of the remaining four chapters of the extant *GSLZ*. Its terminology and also some of its syntactic constructions seem directly adopted from BML and ZWL. As Graham has argued, both of these chapters mainly consist of materials dating back to the early Hàn period, possibly even the pre-imperial period.²¹ One of the key terms JBL shares with ZWL – namely, the expression *jiān* 兼 – appears to be directly adopted from these materials. However, the received ZWL seems corrupt and reveals more or less obvious traces of late editorial interference. The very form of the relevant argument in ZWL strongly suggests that the character 兼 is a graphic corruption of an original *wú* 無. Regardless of this detail, JBL in tandem with ZWL allows for a reinterpretation of two of the most dazzling and popular sophisms current in the medieval period: the claim that “pointing is non-pointing” (指[之]非指) in the *Zhuāngzǐ*²² and the phrase, already associated with the name of Gōngsūn Lóng in pre-imperial sources, “Jack has three ears” (臧三耳).²³ What is striking about the analysis of the relationship between ‘subsistents’ (‘hidden qualities’, *cáng* 藏) and ‘pointings’ (‘indicating qualities’, *zhǐ* 指) in JBL and ZWL is that it strongly resembles the distinction in the *Chéngshílùn* according to which invisible primordial qualities – among them ‘hardness’ or ‘solidity’ (*jiān* 堅) – become manifest as the sensual base (Sanskrit *rūpa*; or, in Chinese, *sè* 色) which provides the material for the mind’s construction of things, which are therefore considered essentially ‘detached’ or ‘separate’ (*lí* 離) from the material base.

²¹ See his Graham 1956/7.

²² *Zhuāngzǐ*, ‘Qíwù lùn’ 6 (Guō 1978: 33).

²³ The variant 臧三耳 (“Zāng has three ears”) is transmitted in the early medieval ‘Gōngsūn Lóng’ chapter of the *Kōngcóngzǐ* (Fù 2011: 283) and in Liú Shào’s 劉邵 (fl. 224 CE) “Zhàodū fù” 趙都賦 (Rhapsody on the Capital of Zhào), quoted in *Tàipíng Yùlǎn*, fasc. 464 (Lǐ 1960: 2135), which, like the *LSCQ*, has 藏 instead of 臧.

Taking these observations together, it thus seems plausible that the author of JBL was not only influenced by the *Chéngshìlùn*, but that he was at the same time the compiler of a collection which already came close to our received *GSLZ*.

In the seventh section, I will return to Shěn Yǒudǐng's suggestion that ZWL was integrated into the *GSLZ* from its alleged predecessor, the *Discourse on Preserving White*, only in the second half of the seventh century. It is clear that Shěn's assumption that JBL was already part of the *Shǒubái lùn*, if correct, would preclude the crucial role ZWL played in the arrangement of JBL, as the latter would have circulated independently of the former. However, if Shěn is right and BML and ZWL indeed circulated independently of the *Discourse of Preserving White* up to the early decades of the Táng period, then there are indications that even the very compilation of the *GSLZ* in its received form might have occurred under the direct influence of a prominent Buddhist text. These indications are closely related to MSL, which would thus appear to have been included in an earlier version of the *GSLZ* or one of its predecessors. As I consider the interdependence of JBL and ZWL evident, Shěn's hypothesis seems plausible only if it is adjusted in one additional respect: since JBL is unlikely to have been composed independently of ZWL, its composition can hardly predate the inclusion of ZWL into the *GSLZ* or its predecessor(s). This also implies that the *Discourse on Preserving White* either contained neither JBL nor ZWL, or that it included both of them. If Shěn is right, and if the inclusion of ZWL in the *GSLZ* took place only in the seventh century CE, then this would also indicate the time when JBL itself was composed. However, the Buddhist references implicit in the *GSLZ* point toward the possibility that this might have happened considerably earlier.

On balance then, and in spite of its exploratory character, the present study identifies a few more or less tangible cases of hidden Buddhist influence in the *GSLZ*.

2 The Mohist “Building Blocks”: Textual Borrowing and Imitation in the *GSLZ*

Informed by traditional accounts on the intellectual history of pre-imperial China, many specialists in the early twentieth century interpreted the obvious similarities between the *GSLZ* and the Mohist ‘Canons’ in terms of topics and vocabulary as indicative of a common origin in a shared intellectual milieu, or as an effect of the systematization and explanation of Gōngsūn Lóng's ideas by

the allegedly more recent Later Mohists.²⁴ The decisive clue for determining the exact relationship between the two texts was provided by the reconstruction of the internal reference system between the ‘Canons’ and the corresponding ‘Explanations’. Originally, the latter were tagged by a reference character, usually the first character of the respective lemma in the ‘Canons’. It was on these grounds that a specialist in Mohist studies, Wú Yùjiāng 吳毓江 (1898–1977), identified the first instance in which a passage from the Mohist ‘Canons’ doubtlessly predates the corresponding parallel in the *GS LZ*.²⁵ Compare the following passages:

- [1] *GS LZ*, ‘*Jiānbái lùn*’ (DZ, 1172 [fasc. 840], j. 3, p. 3r [17r], col. 2–5):²⁶
 曰：於石一也，堅白二也，而在於石。故有知焉，有不知焉，有見焉 { 有不見焉 }²⁷
 故知與不知相與離，見與不見相與藏。藏故孰謂之不離？

B says: “Insofar as they are [instantiated] in a stone [hard and white] are one, insofar as they are hard and white [they] are two [items], although they are situated in the stone. Therefore, there is something in it [= the stone] that is perceivable, and something that is unperceivable; there is something in it that is visible {and something that is invisible}. What is perceivable and what is unperceivable are thus separate from each other; what is visible and what is invisible are contained from each other. Therefore, as they are contained from each other, who would thus say about them that they are not separate?”²⁸

- [2] *Mòzǐ*, ‘*Mòjīng*’, ‘*Mòjīngshuō*’ B 37:²⁹
 Jīng: 於一有知焉，有不知焉，說在 (DZ/1176/10/4r=503³¹/9.2–9.12)
 {存} [= 在]。³⁰

²⁴ See Graham 1956/7: 157; for an overview of these various positions, see Johnston/Ping, this volume, pp. 45–85.

²⁵ Graham 1956/7: 157; Graham 1967: 368.

²⁶ Hereafter, references to the *Dào zàng* 道藏 will be given as follows: DZ, vol. 1172, fasc. 3, p. 3r [17r], col. 2–5 = DZ/1172/3/3r=17r/2–5. If the character number is indicated, it follows the period after the line number.

²⁷ This has been emended on account of parallelism; see Páng 1979: 40.

²⁸ Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are mine.

²⁹ Graham 1978: 404.

³⁰ This has been emended according to Liáng Qǐchāo (1989 [1920]: 127), as quoted in Graham 1956/7: 157.

³¹ In quotations from the ‘Canons’ and ‘Explanations’, page numbers following the equal sign refer to the page number in the reprint of the DZ version in Graham 1978: 499–525.

Shuō: 於：石一也，堅白二也，而在石。故有 (DZ/1176/10/
智焉，有不智焉，可。³² 13r=511/4.17–6.2)

C[anon]: In one single thing there is something known and something unknown. Illustrated by “Being in it”.

E[xplanation of]: “IN...”: A stone is one, hardness and whiteness are two, but are in the stone. Therefore, it is possible to have knowledge of one but not of the other.³³

These two passages from JBL and the Mohist ‘Explanations’ (hereafter MS) B 37 are almost identical. The only difference is the presence of the preposition *yú* 於 in the phrase “*zài yú shí*” 在於石 in JBL. Graham presents this example as “decisive proof that the original context of the common sentences is that of the *Mòzǐ*”.³⁴ Tán Jiěfǔ 譚戒甫 (1887–1974) has also noted that this passage is identical with the MS, but he speculated that the ‘*yú*’ was inserted by a later copyist who adapted the passage to the MS.³⁵ However, the passage of JBL quoted in [1] rather suggests that it was the compiler who “corrected” the text which he adopted from the MS by repeating the preposition *yú* from the beginning of the Explanation (MS) in the second instance of the phrase “in the stone” (*zài shí* 在石) later in the sentence. This clearly supports Graham’s thesis. If this is true, then the compiler of JBL must have ignored the fact that *yú* in the MS did not belong to the syntactic structure of the following explanation. Concealed by the sequential rearrangement of the MS sometime in the final century BCE, this reference system interconnecting the ‘Canons’ and the ‘Explanations’ fell into oblivion for many centuries, until it was restored by Qīng philologists.³⁶ Judging from this single instance, Graham’s case could possibly still be challenged, because the Mohist ‘Canons’ and ‘Explanations’ (‘*Mòjīng*’ and ‘*Mòjīngshuō*’, respectively; henceforth MJS) in their transmitted form are highly corrupted and just as unique in the record of alleged pre-imperial literature as the *GSLZ* itself. One might further argue that this almost verbatim similarity reflects a common

³² Quoted following Graham 1956/7: 157.

³³ Graham 1956/7: 158. See also Graham 1967: 368. Graham is confident that the author of JBL is mistaken in relating the topic of the two inseparables which “hard and white” are said to represent to the additional problem of their belonging to the two different senses of ‘touch’ and ‘sight’.

³⁴ Graham 1956/7: 158.

³⁵ Dù Guóxiáng (1962: 88) adopts this view.

³⁶ For a summary of philological studies on the *Mòzǐ* during the Qīng period, see Graham 1978: 70–72.

intellectual context with a shared set of stock examples or ready-made formulas for discussing certain philosophical problems. Or one might point out that it is implausible to exclude, at least *a priori*, the idea that the reference system in the Mohist ‘Canons’ and ‘Explanations’ does not allow for the possibility that the reference characters which introduce the ‘Explanations’ might actually be integrated into its syntax. However, Shěn Yǒudǐng and Graham have identified at least one more explicit instance of an analogous example,³⁷ and Graham has suggested a third case.³⁸ Taken together, these cases of accidental and apparently unnoticed integration of head characters into the running text of JBL seems an almost watertight proof for the hypothesis that it was in fact the composers of the *GSLZ* who copied from the ‘Canons’.

Moreover, there are instances of other parallel passages, such as [3] below, in which the *GSLZ* interprets as a single line of argument what in the Mohist counterpart seems to be a simple list of pairs of equivalent examples illustrating different instances of a common kind of binary relationship:

[3a] *GSLZ*, ‘jiānbái lùn’ (DZ/1172/3/2r[16r]/7–8; 2v[16v]/1–3):

曰：得其白，得其堅，見與不見離³⁹。與不見離，一一不相盈，故離。離也者，藏也。

A: “Having got its whiteness and its hardness, *its visible [part] and invisible [part] are separate*. As it (= the visible, white) is separate from the invisible, the [first] one (= visible/white) and the [second] one (= invisible/hard) do not pervade each other. Therefore, they are separate. Being separate, they are contained (from each other).”

37 JBL (DZ/1172/3/1r[15r]/2.3–2.6 [無堅得白]) corresponds *verbatim* to MS B 15 (DZ/1176/10/10v=509/8.8–8.11; in the Mohist parallel, – DZ page 8, line 8 – 無 is the reference character); see Shěn 1992a: 505. In a revised version of his original article, Graham included this example, which was missing in the original paper, see Graham 1990a: 139–140. It was already adopted in Graham 1967: 368.

38 JBL (DZ/1172/3/2v[16v]/1–2; 曰石之白，石之堅，見與不見 二與三，若廣修而相盈也，其非舉乎?) vs. MS B 4 (DZ/1176/10/10r=508/5.1–5.13; 見不見離 一二 不相盈 廣循 堅白), where the negative 不 in MS stands for the reference character which occurs in the second rather than first position of the explanation, according to Graham. Cf. MJ B 4 (DZ/1176/10/2v=501/10.1–10.17; 不可偏去而二 說在 見與俱 一與二 廣與循). See also Graham 1967: 368. Possibly, the ‘fēi’ 非 in “fēi jǔ” 非舉 (JBL DZ/1172/3/3v[16v]/3.1–3.2) is analogous in reflecting the head character ‘bù’ 不 in MS B5, which immediately follows (DZ/1176/10/10r=508/5.14–5.16; 舉不重 [...]).

39 Insertion of 離 follows *Shuōfū* 說郭 (Táo 1986 [1927]: vol. 8, fasc. 47, p. 5r, l. 10). For a detailed discussion on the *Shuōfū* version of the *GSLZ*, see Indraccolo 2009: 70–79; Indraccolo 2013.

B: If the stone's whiteness and the stone's hardness, *its visible and its invisible [parts], [if] these two combine, then the three (whiteness, hardness, stone) come to pervade each other mutually by spreading (into each other) in their entire width and length. And this could be a case of its (= the stone's) non-selection?*

[3b] *Mòzǐ*, 'Mòjīng', 'Mòjīngshuō' B 4:

不可偏去而二。說在見與俱，一與二，廣與循。(DZ/1176/10/2v=501/10.1–10.17)

Non-reducible twofoldness. Illustrated by *seeing and appearing, one and two, breadth and length*.

|見|不|見離，一二不相盈，廣循堅白。(DZ/1176/10/10r=508/5.1–5.13)

"NON...": *Seeing and appearing are separated, one and two do not fill each other up, breadth and length [are coextensive like] hard and white.*

The case of [4] below is somewhat different. Here, the recontextualization of the Mohist snippets forces a reinterpretation of crucial terms, which is obviously alien to the original:

[4a] *GSLZ*, 'Tōngbiàn lùn' (DZ/1172/2/4v[12v]/10–5r[13r]/1; 5r[13r]/5–6):

青白不相與，而相與，反對也。不相鄰，而相鄰，不害其方也。不害其方者，反而對，各當其所。若左右不驪。

Green and white [as such] are not combined with each other, but if one combines them with each other, they oppose each other as counterparts. [As such] they are not adjoining with each other, but if one adjoins them with each other, *they do not intrude into their [respective] domains*. Those *not intruding into their [respective] domains* oppose each other as counterparts, each of them fitting its own position. Like left and right, they do not get mixed.

[4b] *Mòzǐ*, 'Mòjīng', 'Mòjīngshuō' B 65:⁴⁰

一法者之相與也盡，若方之相召也。說在方。(DZ/1176/10/4r=502/5.11–6.10)

一：方貌盡。俱有法而異，或木或石，不害其方之相台[=合]也盡。貌猶方也。物俱然。(DZ/1176/10/15v=514/4.12–6.6)

40 Cf. Graham 1978: 437, also for possible emendations.

The mutual relation of elements with one and the same criterion is perfect [uniformity]. It is like the mutual correspondence of squares. Illustrated by squareness.

“OF ONE AND THE SAME”: The characteristic of squares is perfect[ly uniform]. This is because in case elements are different although they both have a [specific] criterion, one being in wood, the other in stone, *this does not interfere with the fact that the matching of these squares is perfect*. Their characteristic is that they match in squareness. These things are both (lit. all) like this (i.e. alike in having the property of being square).

Even without going into further detail, it is obvious here that the original meaning of the phrase from the ‘Canons’ underwent a fundamental reinterpretation due to its recontextualization in TBL. This is most obvious in case of the term ‘*fāng*’. Its specific Mohist interpretation as the geometrical form of squareness is lost in the *GSLZ*, which replaces it with the general meaning ‘domain’, by which it refers to a coherent area filled in with a certain color. One could argue that the brevity of this passage hardly allows for the far-reaching inferences drawn here. However, it is important to consider that this short sequence occurs at the beginning of the third part of TBL, only a few lines after the second part with its animal examples, which are most probably adopted from the ‘Canons’; a look at the ‘Explanations’ reveals that the discussion about the perfect uniformity of geometrical forms in [4b] (B 65) *immediately* precedes the illustration of the union of classes of natural kinds into combined classes, exemplified by ‘ox-plus-horse’ (B 66), which is the source informing the second part of TBL.⁴¹

There are even examples, such as [5] below, in which a single Mohist phrase was used as a model to construe two slightly varied parallel sentences in the *GSLZ*. Both passages are far from unambiguous. What we can observe is

41 The section of TBL which Graham has identified as essentially adopted from MS B 66 and 67 contains a total of 139 characters. If we ignore repetitions, *verbatim* correspondences amount to a total of 53 characters (38%). In addition, there are 10 cases of slight variation where identical constructions are varied by replacing the animal terms of the original. If one includes the variant characters 唯 (TBL) and 惟 (MS), there are a total of 66 characters in TBL that are identical with MS B 66 and 67 (47%). Due to the fact that one phrase in TBL sometimes has parallels in both B 66 and B 67, the number of correspondences is actually higher than the total number of characters in TBL which have correspondences in the the two lemmas of MS. All in all, roughly half of the material in TBL has literal correspondences in the MS. Moreover, all the characters in MS except 用, 難, 說, and 偏 also occur in TBL. The compilers of the latter thus seem to have exploited almost the entire textual material available in their source. On this, see Suter, forthcoming.

that the Mohist version uses the demonstratives *cǐ* 此 and *bǐ* 彼 exclusively in their pronominal sense, while relying on a verbal use of anaphorical *shì* 是 to refer to the *kind* of thing a referent belongs to, rather than to the respective object itself. In this way, it serves to “identify” the kind of thing to which both entities – determined by the opposite demonstrative pronouns – commonly belong, and thus it describes a classification based on a sort of inductive inference advancing from one “such” thing to the next.⁴² In contrast, the *GSLZ* parallel removes the character 是 altogether and cannot be interpreted without assuming that the demonstratives 此 and 彼 are given both a verbal and a (pro-)nominal meaning. I will provide no translations at this point and abstain from any further analysis; not only might it become even more controversial than what I have already written, but a translation would certainly divert us from what is essential in the present context: the *GSLZ*’s almost literal adoption of the Mohist formulation, in two slight variations:⁴³

[5a] *Mòzǐ*, ‘*Mòjīngshuō*’ B 33:⁴⁴

知是之非此也，有知是之不在此也。 (DZ/1176/10/12v=511/8.5–9.1)

[5b] *GSLZ*, ‘*Míngshí lùn*’ (DZ/1172/3/6r[20r]/4–6):

知此之非{此}也， 知此之不在此也，明[=則]不謂也。
知彼之非彼也， 知彼之不在彼， 則不謂也。

These few examples clearly substantiate the hypothesis that considerable parts of the extant *GSLZ* were copied from and/or written on the model of the ‘Canons’. JBL contains seven passages – ranging from one to twenty characters in length – which are copied verbatim from the Mohist ‘Canons’ and ‘Explanations’. Out of some 600 characters, 75 characters (or 12.5%) are cited from that source. The second part of TBL, drawing on the animal examples adopted from MS B 66 and B 67, consists of some 139 characters. Depending on how one counts the Mohist borrowings, between 53 (38%) and 70 characters (50%) occur in sequences directly adopted from the ‘Canons’. Some 25 characters (11%) of the total 229 characters in MSL are literally culled from the MS, and one passage of 13 characters in

⁴² Graham (1978: 400 n. 402) says this in a somewhat circuitous fashion: “*shih* ‘the thing in question, what we judge the object to be’ contrasting with *tz’ü* ‘to object/place here’ [...] the former belongs to the realm of names, the latter of objects.”

⁴³ Bold text indicates the *GSLZ*’s literal borrowing from the MJS. Highlighted passages show slight variations in the text borrowed from MJS.

⁴⁴ Cf. Amano 1968: 225–226.

length is additionally construed on this model.⁴⁵ As Graham stressed, the remaining parts of the *GSLZ* have no such literal parallels with the Mohist ‘Canons’ and ‘Explanations’.

3 *Gōngsūn Lóng* and the Medieval Renaissance of Mohism

The first more or less accurately datable textual evidence for the existence of the Mohist ‘Canons’ and ‘Explanations’ is a short fragment by the late third-century CE scholar Lǚ Shèng 魯勝, which is preserved in the *History of the Jin* (*Jìnshū* 晉書), compiled under the guidance of Fáng Xuánlíng 房玄齡 (579–648) and completed in 648 CE.⁴⁶ Lǚ’s preface to his *Commentary on the Mohist Disputations* (*Xù Mòbiàn zhù* 敘墨辯注) mentions a division of the text by this name into “canons” and “explanations”. It is mainly due to this description of the content of what it calls *Mohist Disputations* that scholars usually identify them with the “dialectical chapters” – books 40–44 of the extant *Mòzǐ*. Lǚ’s text is crucial for Graham, as it explicitly states that, in Lǚ’s time, the writings of the “School of Names” had long been lost.⁴⁷ This implies that the *GSLZ*, which was still listed in the bibliographical section of the dynastic history of the Western Hàn (*Hànshū*, completed in 110 CE), must already have disappeared when Lǚ wrote his commentary. However, it is clear that Lǚ’s preface itself draws upon what the *Hànshū* has to say about the “School of Names”; hence it is of little independent value for the reconstruction of the intellectual history of the Warring States period. At the same time, it is still highly relevant as a witness to the intellectual landscape of the late third century CE.

First, Lǚ’s preface speaks about names in a seemingly peculiar way, which nonetheless seems symptomatic for this period: although the relevant passage is obscure and seems to have suffered from textual corruption,⁴⁸ what it

⁴⁵ For details, see Suter, forthcoming.

⁴⁶ Cf. Graham 1978: 66–67. Graham assumes that Lǚ was already dealing with a “corrupted version” of the ‘Canons’, and thus suggests that his understanding must have been rather limited. The limited materials on which Graham bases his own sketch of the history of Later Mohism rest on pre- and early imperial sources, the dating of which is highly problematic.

⁴⁷ Graham 1956/7: 179–180

⁴⁸ The text as quoted in the *Jìnshū* starts with the phrase “*bì yǒu*” 必有 (“Necessarily, there is”). Sūn Yíràng, who includes the preface in his *Mòzǐ xiàngǔ*, emends the subject ‘*míng*’ 名. Likewise, Sūn complements ‘*xíng*’ 形 as the direct object of ‘*chá*’ 察 in the second sentence.

basically claims is that there is no better way to ‘discern’ or ‘specify’ (*chá* 察) the ‘shape’ (*xíng* 形) of a thing than to ‘distinguish colors’ (*bié sè* 別色).⁴⁹ These words by the first commentator on the Mohist ‘Canons’ to be recorded are reflected, almost verbatim, in Kǒng Chuān’s 孔穿 explanation of the “white horse” argument in the ‘Gōngsūn Lóng’ chapter of the *Kǒngcóngzǐ*. His analysis is based on an opposition between ‘looking’ (*dǔ* 睹) and ‘discerning’ or ‘specifying’ (*chá* 察) – the former grasping white, the latter ‘recognizing’ (*zhī* 知) a horse in it. Moreover, although the next sentence is not very clear, it doubtlessly identifies the color with the ‘outside’, while it seems to associate ‘recognition’ with the ‘inside’, clearly attributing a ‘distinguishing’ (*bié* 別) function to color.⁵⁰ Even if the brevity of the two passages hardly allows one to conclude with a degree of certainty that both Lǚ’s preface and the ‘Gōngsūn Lóng’ chapter present the same analysis, it is still clear that both use precisely the same vocabulary – a vocabulary which is distinctly medieval.⁵¹ Our only textual

These emendations seem modest, but they modify the passage in a decisive way that implies far-reaching consequences for its interpretation. See Sūn 1978 (1936): appendix, p. 13.

49 *Jīnshū* 94, ‘Lièzhuàn’ 64, Lǚ Shèng, in Fáng 2008: 1540.

50 睹之得見其白，察之則知其馬，色以名別內由外顯，謂之白馬，名實當矣。I suggest: “Looking at it, you come to see its whiteness; discerning it, you come to recognize its horse-ness. Color is distinguished by means of a name, what is internal (= concept/name) is presented through what is external (= color); in calling it ‘white horse’, name and substance match each other”; *Kǒngcóngzǐ*, ‘Gōngsūn Lóng’ 2; cf. Fù 2011: 280. For a less literal translation, cf. Yoav 1989: 132.

51 While the collocation *dǔ sè* 睹色 seems absent in Hàn and pre-Hàn texts, the expression *chá xíng* 察形 occurs in a number of late Eastern Hàn texts, such as Xú Gàn’s 徐幹 (171–217) *Zhōnglùn* 中論 (‘Guì yàn’ 貴驗 2), Dàdài Lǐjì 大戴禮記 (‘Bǎo fù’ 保傳 24; on dating this collection to the second century CE, see Riegel 1993: 456), and the slightly later *Kǒngzǐ jiāyǔ* (‘Guān Zhōu’ 觀周), compiled by Wáng Sù (195–256). The phrase is related to the mirror metaphor with which it co-occurs in all three instances. While the expression *dǔ sè* is absent from the early medieval *Lǎozǐ wēizhǐ lìlüè* 老子微指例略, most probably authored by Wáng Bì 王弼 (226–249) (cf. Wagner 1986: 93–96), it is nonetheless palpable in its definition of *wēi* 微 (‘infinitesimal/subtle’) as “what is taken from the infinitesimally obscure and cannot be seen” (取於幽微而不可睹) (cf. Wagner 1986: 109). Notably – in a polemic against rival schools, such as Confucians, Legalists, and Mohists – this text moreover characterizes the representatives of the “School of Names” according to their specific bias on the secondary issue of “inspecting their [= things] delimitation and fulfillment [of the visual field] (or/and: assignment and fulfillment [of duties/functions]?)” (睹其定真). I do not follow Wagner, who takes the possessive *qí* 其 as referring to “some of the arguments in the Laozi” and relates the passage to biased readings of this classic; see Wagner 1986: 114. In his commentary on the *Xìcí* 繫辭 roughly one century later, Hǎn Kāngbó 韓康伯 uses similar phrasing when he notes that “what has no form can neither be investigated by virtue of names, nor envisioned by virtue of forms” (无形不可以名尋，不可以形睹) (*Zhōuyì zhù shū*, fasc. 12, p. 276).

witness which reflects a heightened interest in the Mohist ‘Canons’ during the medieval period thus speaks a language which is clearly reflected in one of the first explanations of Gōngsūn Lóng’s white horse argument as well – a fact which seems hardly accidental.

This connection becomes even more evident in Lǚ Shèng’s remark at the end of his sketch of the method of distinguishing colors in order to discern shapes, where he notes that “this is the reason why there is the analysis (*biàn* 辯) of ‘hard’ and ‘white’”. Taking into account the fact that commentators since the Later Hàn period have consistently associated ancient references to Gōngsūn Lóng’s sophism on “hard and white” with his claim about the “white horse”,⁵² it is almost certain that this coda actually points toward the famous white horse argument. Additional details in Lǚ’s text seem to further corroborate this: although the conciseness of the passage hardly allows for any definite conclusions, it clearly talks about the investigation of ‘having/being there’ and ‘not having/not being there’ (*yǒu* 有 vs. *wú* 無) as the main method for defining the domains of the instantiation of names – or rather concepts – (*míng* 名),⁵³ further proceeding from ‘classifying something as identical’ and ‘not classifying something as identical’ (*shì* 是 vs. *bù shì* 不是) to ‘allowing’ and ‘not allowing’ (*kě* 可 vs. *bù kě* 不可). Yet this procedure does not quite resemble what we find in the Mohist ‘Minor Selections’ (Xiǎoqǔ 小取, ch. 46), for example, in which a method of semantic disambiguation advances from the identical classification (*shì* 是) of things (*wù* 物) to the assignment of properties to different instances of the things

52 Graham 1956/7: 175; Graham 1967: 366; Hé 1967: 178.

53 The little the text does specify about *míng* is that they belong to the “inner” realm of a human being. Moreover, we can infer that they are thought to be involved in a kind of insight termed “*chá*”, which is explicitly contrasted with mere visual perception. It therefore seems plausible to assume that names were conceived of as parts of the mental apparatus of human cognition, rather than an external realm of language. This essentially “non-linguistic” character of the term speaks in favor of an interpretation in the sense of ‘concept’ or ‘notion’ rather than ‘name’ or ‘word’. Such an interpretation moreover parallels the use of the term in roughly contemporaneous Chinese Buddhist texts that identify the ‘nominal’ (*míng*) with the fallacious construction of objects in the mind, as opposed to the ‘material’ base (*sè*) on which the imagination of mind allegedly operates. This is indeed very reminiscent of how Buddhist *Sarvāstivādin*s understood conception: “Mental perceptual consciousness not only apprehends the particular characteristic of an object-field in its generic category, for example, visible material form like the color blue, but also apprehends the designation, ‘this is blue.’ Thus, unlike the five externally directed types of perceptual consciousness, mental perceptual consciousness operates by means of designation (*adhivacana*), or names” (Cox 1988: 36). The translation of *Sarvāstivāda abhidharma* texts into Chinese set in in the late second century CE (Willemen et al. 1998: 129; cf. also Dessein 2016) and thus roughly coincides with the renaissance of the “School of Names” under discussion here.

thus classified – or the participation of these things in relations with other things (both referred to by the term *rán* 然).⁵⁴ Rather, the sketch Lǚ provides is much more reminiscent of discourses like those preserved in the extant BML, in which one of the problems discussed is whether the attribution of a specific quality to identically ‘classified’ (*shì* 是) things (a horse vs. a *white* horse) ‘invalidates’ (*bù kě* 可) the inference that the thus-classified thing (the horse) indeed ‘exists’ (*yǒu* 有). As is well known, BML famously argues that the further qualification of a ‘horse’ as ‘white’ (*báimǎ* 白馬) invalidates the conclusion that there is a ‘horse’ (*yǒu mǎ* 有馬). Toward the end of his preface, Lǚ Shèng eventually returns to what he mentioned as the first function of names at the very beginning of his text: the “distinction between sameness and difference” (*bié tóng yì* 別同異). This, however, is nothing less than one of the first topics consistently associated with Gōngsūn Lóng since antiquity – a problem which some medieval commentators also relate to the white horse argument.⁵⁵ Even if the exact relationship between the renaissance of Mohist disputation, as exemplified in Lǚ’s preface, and the

54 Cf. Mòzǐ, ‘Xiǎoqǔ’, Sūn 1978 (1936): 150–154; Graham (1978) discusses this under the title “names and objects”; see his Graham 1978: 476–494; on the structure of the arguments and an interpretation of these technical terms, see esp. pp. 482–484. For the fundamental difference between *shì* 是 and *rán* 然 in judgments, see my sketch in Suter 2016: 387. Graham believes that the little which the preface reveals about the text on which Lǚ comments allows us to conclude that he did not know the ‘Xiǎoqǔ’ (Graham 1978: 67). Based on this assumption, our observation would hardly be surprising. However, it is worth noting that Simǎ Biāo’s 司馬彪 (d. 306) roughly contemporaneous commentary on the *Zhuāngzǐ* imitates one of the sentence patterns presented in the ‘Xiǎoqǔ’ (“to be [like] this in one case, not to be [like] this in the other”; *yī shì ér yī fēi* 一是而一非 [Bì 1995: 171]). When he explains one of the paradoxes transmitted in the ‘Tiānxià’ chapter (白狗黑; “a white puppy is black.”), he seems to modify an example from the ‘Xiǎoqǔ’, simply replacing the phrase “(the) horse is blind” (*mǎ pàn* 馬盼) from the Mòzǐ with “blind (one-eyed) puppy” (*miǎo gǒu* 眇狗): “If the eyes of a puppy are blind, one calls it a blind puppy. If the eyes of a puppy are big, one does not say a ‘big puppy’. This (= saying so) is in one case right ([like] this), in one case wrong (not [like] this). But when the eyes of a white puppy are black, one can also call it a black puppy” (狗之目眇, 謂之眇狗。狗之目大, 不曰大狗。此乃一是一非。然則白狗黑目, 亦可謂黑狗。). Cf. *Jīngdiǎn shìwén*, p. 405; cf. also the ‘Xiǎoqǔ’ parallel: 之馬之目盼, 則為之馬盼。之馬之目大, 不謂之馬大。 (“If the eyes attributed to a horse are blind, then one thinks of it that the horse is blind; if the eyes attributed to a horse are big, one does not say of it that the horse is big”); (Bì 1995: 171). Even if Guō’s imitation of the pattern may not be entirely accurate, it is highly plausible that he took it from the ‘Xiǎoqǔ’, or from a textual fragment very similar in kind, which thus must have been available to him at the turn from the third to the fourth century CE.

55 This appears to be the case for Gāo Yōu 高誘 (168–212 CE) and is made explicit by Simǎ Biāo 司馬彪 (d. 306 CE). Cf. Graham 1956/7: 178.

renewed interest in the figure of Gōngsūn Lóng since the turn from the second to the third century CE remains a moot point, there can be little doubt that both phenomena are closely interrelated.

Further supporting this assumption is the close association of Mohism with the figure of Gōngsūn Lóng in the ‘Zhòng Ní’ 仲尼 (Confucius) chapter of the *Lièzǐ* 列子, a text apparently composed at the turn from the third to the fourth century CE.⁵⁶ Out of the seven theses which are attributed to Gōngsūn Lóng in this chapter, two are directly adopted from the ‘Canons’,⁵⁷ a fact which did not escape the attention of the late fourth-century CE commentator Zhāng Zhàn, as mentioned above.⁵⁸ Of the remaining five theses, the one about *zhǐ* 指 which does not ‘arrive at/reach’ [*zhì* 至] (the aim?) seems to be taken from the ‘Tiānxià’ 天下 (All Under Heaven) chapter of the *Zhuāngzǐ*,⁵⁹ where it is attributed to the ‘debaters’ (*biànzhe* 辯者) in general, rather than to Gōngsūn Lóng in particular.⁶⁰ A second thesis is arguably a modified extract from that source, replacing the *Zhuāngzǐ*’s orphaned calf with a foal.⁶¹ Another thesis is the debater’s claim about the white horse, which seems to have been associated with Gōngsūn Lóng at least since the time of Liú Xiàng’s 劉向 (77–6 BCE) *Biélù* 別錄.⁶² The first thesis listed seems to refer to a passage in the Western Hàn *Yántiělùn* 鹽鐵論 (Discourses on Salt and Iron),⁶³ which is among the oldest sources to attribute any specific claim to the debater.⁶⁴ A final thesis is of unclear origin, although scholars have speculated that it is also taken from the ‘Tiānxià’ chapter, where it is said that having ‘arrived/reached’ [*zhì* 至] (the aim?) is not being ‘disrupted/disconnected’ (*jué* 絕) [from the beginning?].⁶⁵

56 Barrett notes that the work was mentioned by Zhāng Huá 張華 (d. 300 CE), and Graham has observed that it copies material from a Buddhist text translated into Chinese in 281 CE. See Barrett 1993: 299; Graham 1961: 197. For a detailed account of Buddhist influences in the *Lièzǐ*, see also Jì Xiànlín 1957.

57 This is true for the fourth (“a shadow does not move”) and the fifth theses (“a hair will draw a weight of a thousand *jūn*”), which correspond to B 17 and B 52, respectively. See *Lièzǐ*, ‘Zhòngní’, in Zhāng 1978: 48; cf. e.g. Graham 1960: 88–89; Graham 1978: 373–375 (B 17); 420–421 (B 52).

58 Cf. n. 17, pp. 433–434, above.

59 Zhāng 1978: 48; for the *Zhuāngzǐ* parallel, see Guō 1978: 478.

60 Guō 1978: 480.

61 Zhāng 1978: 49; cf. Guō 1978: 479.

62 Zhāng 1978: 48. The relevant *Biélù* passage is quoted in Péi Yǐn’s 裴駰 fifth-century CE *Shǐjì jǐjiě* 史記集解, in Simǎ 1973: 2370.

63 Fasc. 7, ‘Zhēnshí’ 箴石, in Wáng Lìqì 1992: 405; Huán/Bái 2012: 157.

64 Zhāng 1978: 48.

65 Guō 1978: 478.

Féng Yǒulán has hypothesized, not least on the basis of the *Lièzǐ* parallel, that the character 至 in the *Zhuāngzǐ* is a miswriting of original 物.⁶⁶ It is likely that the *Lièzǐ* collected these theses from various written sources: two from the Mohist ‘Canons’, two or three from the *Zhuāngzǐ*, and one from the *Yántiělùn*. That the compiler of the *Lièzǐ* did in fact gather these materials from other sources seems to be supported by their sequence: he starts with the oldest statement unambiguously attributed to Gōngsūn Lóng, then adds two statements which the *Zhuāngzǐ* associates with the debaters in general (yet without failing to mention Gōngsūn Lóng), eventually turns to a saying commonly identified with Gōngsūn Lóng, and concludes with another statement taken from the *Zhuāngzǐ* and two adopted from the Mohist ‘Canons’ – which, as we have seen, are closely related to Gōngsūn Lóng in other contemporary sources. In spite of this apparent reliance on written texts, nothing in this list seems to suggest that its author would have been aware of the *GSLZ* as we know it. And while the adoption of some of these theses from the Mohist ‘Canons’ in this Gōngsūn Lóng pericope seems of limited relevance to the whole of the *Lièzǐ*, there is an arguably analogous example which also seems to be of some significance to our investigation of the *GSLZ*.

One of the passages from the ‘Canons’ which is quoted in the seven theses and attributed there to Gōngsūn Lóng is the definition of “dynamic equilibrium” (*jūn* 鈞) in B 52. It is (in its variant form 均) developed into a fundamental term capturing the essential notion of “universal equanimity” later in the *Lièzǐ*.⁶⁷ It is illuminating to see that the composers of the *Lièzǐ* elaborated on what was originally a *technical* term from the ‘Canons’ to capture a *philosophical* concept central to their own philosophy. This method of adopting short passages from the ‘Canons’ and reinterpreting them by integrating them into a new text strikingly resembles the integration and imitation of *Mòzǐ* passages in the extant *GSLZ*. Shěn Yǒudǐng has pointed out this use of specific medieval compilations to turn the sometimes rather crude sayings of ancient debaters into

⁶⁶ Féng 1934: 178; cf. Kou 1953: 79; Perleberg 1952: 47; Moritz 1973: 154–155. The *Lièzǐ* passage is also reminiscent of Ruǎn Jí’s 阮籍 (210–263 CE) roughly contemporaneous *Dá Zhuāng lùn* 達莊論 (Discourse on Understanding *Zhuāngzǐ*); see Ruǎn 1978: 32; trans. in Holzman 1976: 102–109.

⁶⁷ ‘Tāng wèn’ 湯問 8: “Equilibrium is the highest principle in the world. It is like this also in the connection of shapes [= bodies] and things. A balanced [thread as thin as a] hair will [keep] suspend[ed] in mutual balance the lightness and heaviness [of two weights]. If the hair snaps, this is due to the hair’s being out of balance. When it comes to snapping, as long as it is balanced, no [hair] will snap” (均，天下之至理也，連於形物亦然。均髮均縣輕重而髮絕，髮不均也。均也，其絕也，莫絕。); Zhāng 1978: 58. Cf. Graham 1960: 105; 106 n. 1.

refined philosophical arguments.⁶⁸ Thus, more important than the fact that the evidence from the *Lièzǐ*, on the whole, hardly supports the assumption of the existence of anything resembling our extant *GSLZ* is the observation that the way it seems to employ ancient sources is strongly reminiscent of what we observe in the *GSLZ*. This clearly hints at the possibility that the received text of the *GSLZ* (or at least parts of it) might indeed have arisen from the same intellectual background and at roughly the same time as the *Lièzǐ*. The peculiar role of both the figure of Gōngsūn Lóng and materials from the Mohist ‘Canons’ in these processes of reinterpretation within the *Lièzǐ* clearly testify to the intimate association of the debater with the *Mòzǐ*.

Lexical and topical correspondences of the ‘Gōngsūn Lóng’ chapter of the *Kōngcóngzǐ* – and thus also of Lǚ Shèng’s preface – with Liú Shào’s 劉邵 (fl. 196–249 CE) *Rénwùzhì* 人物志 (Human Temperaments), a prominent medieval work of the “School of Names”, hint at a continued interest in the art of disputation, most probably spurred by the Mohist ‘Canons’.

This is also confirmed in Liú Bǐng’s 劉炳 (fl. 400–421 CE) commentary on Liú Shào’s work, which invokes the white horse argument as an example of bad rhetoric, though without attributing this argument to Gōngsūn Lóng.⁶⁹ Moreover, one finds a couple of casual notes in the biographies of Buddhist scholars from the fifth century CE which suggest that, in addition to Confucian and Daoist texts, they had also studied Mohist writings – whatever these may have been.⁷⁰ The *Xù Gāosēngzhuàn* 續高僧傳 (Continued Biographical Accounts of Eminent Monks) records that the scholar–monk Fǎchǒng 法寵 (451–524) abandoned his Buddhist studies in the last years of his life to engage in what the text calls “*míngjiào*” 名教 – literally, “doctrine of names”⁷¹ – a polemical term used by both Daoists and Buddhists to refer to their adversaries.⁷² This suggests that at the turn from the fifth to the sixth century CE, there were circles interested in the problems of names that were considered neither Buddhist nor Confucian. It is certainly possible that the term refers to representatives of the “School of Names”, as reflected in the various sources discussed above. Taken together, this admittedly scarce evidence suggests that from the Later Jin period (317–420)

68 Shěn 1992c (1989): 282, 447.

69 *Rénwùzhì*, ‘Cáilǐ’ 才理 25. See Wáng 2008: 107; Shycrock 1937: 71–72.

70 See the *Gāosēngzhuàn*’s 高僧傳 (Biographical Accounts of Eminent Monks) biographies of Tánfēi 曇斐 (443–519 CE) (T 2059, no. 50, p. 382) and Huīfēn 慧芬 (406–485) (ibid., p. 416).

71 T 50, no. 2050, p. 473a10–11. Cf. Krause 2003: 108.

72 This expression usually refers to Confucians (see e.g. Mather 1976: xii). In this particular context, Carsten Krause assumes a different referent, yet without providing further details; cf. Krause 2003: 108, n. 306.

onward, and throughout the Northern and Southern Dynasties (420–581), there were intellectual contexts in which representatives of a Mohist-informed “School of Names” were in exchange with Buddhist scholars. It thus seems safe to assume not only that many of the school’s propagators were familiar with Buddhist debates and texts, but also that there were Buddhist scholars who were aware of and possibly even conversant in the “Mohist-informed” “art of disputation”.⁷³ This permeability between different intellectual milieus is hardly surprising given the overall doctrinal promiscuity over long stretches of the period, as famously highlighted in the accounts of the *Shishuō Xīnyǔ* 世說新語 (A New Account of Tales of the World).⁷⁴

4 On Seeing Whiteness and Knowing Hardness: JBL and the *Chéngshílùn*

As a next step, we shall now take a closer look at how various chapters of the *GSLZ* make use of the materials adopted from the ‘Canons’ and how this might be indicative of a specifically Buddhist background. To begin, we turn our attention to the ‘Discourse on Hard and White’ (JBL). It is perhaps not an exaggeration to consider this chapter the pivot of the *GSLZ* as we have it today. BML is much more an illustration of the kind of quick-witted dispute commonly associated with ‘debaters’ than a rigorous attempt to provide a comprehensive, coherent explanation of the initial thesis that “a white horse is not horse”. ZWL is repetitive and obscure to the degree of incomprehensibility, and TBL and MSL are both marked by major ruptures and longer passages in which the argument appears, if not obscure, at least implicit. In contrast, and in spite of some controversial passages, JBL is characterized by a consistent line of argument which develops – from the example of a hard white stone – a more or less definite philosophical position. This position is marked by a strict separation of sensual perception from intellectual conception, and the view that what we take for concrete ‘things’ are in fact mental constructs or ‘syntheses’ of the mind, which are based on the percepts presented to the senses. The overall clarity of the essay has even prompted early

⁷³ Krause (2003: 143) notes that the *Chéngshílùn*, which has possibly left its imprint on JBL, was appreciated not least as a model of the art of disputation.

⁷⁴ For a sketch of the intellectual world of early medieval China and the mutual relationship between Daoism, Buddhism, and also Confucianism, see Mather 1976: xviii–xxvi; Dessein 2016. See also Thomas Jansen’s study on the court culture of the Southern Qi 齊 (479–502) and Liáng 梁 (502–557) in Jansen 2000.

modern readers such as Alfred Forke (1867–1944) to compare it with Kant’s epistemological critique.⁷⁵ Crucial technical terms such as *lí* 離 (‘separation/isolation’), *jiān* 兼 (‘synthesis/combination’), *wù* 物 (‘concrete thing’), and *dìng* 定 (‘define/circumscribe’) are more or less precisely elaborated or at least contextualized in this piece, and these also recur in other parts of the *GSLZ*, mostly in BML (*lí*, *dìng*) and ZWL (*jiān*, *wù*), though in rather casual and unsystematic ways. Thus JBL at least implicitly refers to some of the other chapters of the extant *GSLZ*, and it stands out from the others in providing a couple of key terms that point beyond the chapter itself and lend themselves as interpretative guidelines for the entire collection. Consequently, Shěn Yǒudǐng has accorded it a crucial role in the interpretation of the whole book.⁷⁶

However, once seen against the background of Shěn’s and Graham’s detailed textual studies – which have disclosed another, rather vexing characteristic of JBL – this eminent position appears in a rather problematic light. The chapter is replete with parallel passages to the ‘Canons’, but also to other writings that were prominent during the medieval period, such as the *Zhuāngzǐ*. I have already provided selected examples in the second section above, and I shall not discuss these parallels and their possible relationship to JBL in further detail here. The following synopsis highlights JBL passages which parallel other texts and gives an idea of the degree to which it is apparently pieced together from other sources:

[6] Parallel Texts and Probable Sources of JBL⁷⁷

JBL	Parallel passages
「堅、白、石、三，可乎？」	<i>Zhuāngzǐ</i> , ‘Tiānxià’ 7: 「黃馬、驪牛三」 <?> ⁷⁸
曰：「不可。」	
曰：「二可乎？」	
曰：「可。」	
曰：「何哉？」	

⁷⁵ Forke 1901–1902: 37.

⁷⁶ Shěn 1992a: 495, 497; Shěn 1992b (1961): 268.

⁷⁷ In the table, dark grey highlighting marks literal adoptions from other sources. Light grey highlighting marks variations such as character replacements, but also constructions modeled on the suggested source passages listed in the right-hand column.

⁷⁸ On this issue, cf. also Shěn 1992a: 506.

(continued)

JBL	Parallel passages
曰：「 <u>無堅得白</u> ，其舉也二； <u>無白得堅</u> ，其舉也二。」	<i>Mòzǐ</i> , 'Mòjīngshuō' B 15: <u>無：堅得白必相盈也</u>
曰：「得其所白，不可謂無白。得其所堅，不可謂無堅。而之石也，之於然也，非三也？」	
曰：「視不得其所堅，而 <u>得其所白者</u> ， <u>無堅</u> 也。拊不得其所白，而得其所堅。 <u>得其堅也</u> ， <u>無白也</u> 。」	<i>Mòzǐ</i> , 'Mòjīngshuō' B 15: <u>無：堅得白必相盈也</u>
曰：「 <u>天下無白</u> ， <u>不可以視石</u> 。 <u>天下無堅</u> ， <u>不可以謂石</u> 。 <u>堅白石不相外</u> ， <u>藏三</u> ， <u>可乎</u> ？」	<i>Gōngsūn Lóngzǐ</i> , 'Zhīwù lùn': <u>天下無指物不可以謂物</u> <i>Mòzǐ</i> , 'Mòjīngshuō' A 66: <u>堅白不相外也</u> 。 <i>Lǚshì Chūnqiū</i> , 'Shěnyìnglǎn', 'Líwèi' 18 ("臧三牙"); Liú Shào 劉邵 (fl. 224 CE), 'Zhàodū fù' 趙都賦; <i>Kǒngcóngzǐ</i> , 'Gōngsūn Lóng' ("臧三耳")
曰：「有自藏也，非藏而藏也。」	
曰：「其白也，其堅也，而石必得以相盛盈，其自藏奈何？」	
曰：「得其白，得其堅， <u>見與不見離</u> 。 <u>不見離</u> ， <u>一一不相盈</u> ，故離。離也者，藏也。」	<i>Mòzǐ</i> , 'Mòjīngshuō' B 4: <u> 見 不 見離</u> 。一二不相盈。廣循堅白
曰：「石之白，石之堅， <u>見與不見</u> ， <u>二與三</u> ，若 <u>廣修而相盈</u> 也，其非 <u>壘</u> 乎。」	<i>Mòzǐ</i> , 'Mòjīng' B 4: <u>見與俱</u> ， <u>一與二</u> ， <u>廣與循</u> <i>Mòzǐ</i> , 'Mòjīngshuō' B 4 B 5: <u> 見 不 見離</u> 。一二不相盈。廣循堅白， <壘不重>
曰：「物 <u>白</u> 焉， <u>不定其所白</u> 。物 <u>堅</u> 焉， <u>不定其所堅</u> 。不定 <u>者兼</u> ，惡乎其石也？」	<i>Gōngsūn Lóngzǐ</i> , 'Báimǎ lùn': 曰：白者不定所白 <i>Gōngsūn Lóngzǐ</i> , 'Zhīwù lùn': 且指者天下之所兼 <?>
曰：「循石， <u>非彼無石</u> ， <u>非石無所取</u> 乎白。石不相離者固乎。然其無已。」	<i>Zhuāngzǐ</i> , 'Qíwù lùn' 3: 非彼無我，非我無所取。
曰：「 <u>于石一也</u> ， <u>堅白二也</u> ，而在于石。故有 <u>知焉</u> ；有 <u>不知焉</u> ； <u>有見焉</u> ， <u>有不見焉</u> 。故知與不知相與離，見與不見相與藏。藏故，孰謂之不離？」	<i>Mòzǐ</i> , 'Mòjīngshuō' B 7: 於：石一也，堅白二也，而在于石。故有知焉，有不知焉
曰：「目不能堅，手不能白。不可謂無堅，不可謂無白。其異任也，其無以代也。堅白域於石，惡乎離？」	

(continued)

JBL	Parallel passages
曰：「堅末與石為堅，而物兼。末與物為兼，而堅必堅；其不堅石、物而堅。天下未有若堅而堅藏。」	<i>Gōngsūn Lóngzǐ</i> , 'Báimǎ lùn': 白末與馬為白
「白固不能自白，惡能白石物乎？若白者必白，則不白物而白焉，黃黑與之然。」	<i>Gōngsūn Lóngzǐ</i> , 'Zhīwù lùn': 指固自為非指，奚待于物 <?> <i>Mòzǐ</i> , 'Mòjīngshuō' B 70: 若白者必白
「石其無有，惡取堅白石乎？故離也。離也者，因是。」	<i>Zhuāngzǐ</i> , 'Qíwù lùn' 5: 因是因非，因非因是。是以聖人不由，而照之于天，亦因是也。 'Qíwù lùn' 6, 9.
「力與知，果不若因是。且猶白以目以火見，而火不見。則火與目不見而神見。神不見，而見離。」	<i>Mòzǐ</i> , 'Mòjīngshuō' B 5: 舉不重，不與箴非力之任也。為握者之顛倍，非智之任也。 <i>Zhuāngzǐ</i> , 'Qíwù lùn' 5, 6, 9.
「堅以手，而手以捶，是捶與手知而不知。而神與不知。神乎，是之謂離焉。」	<i>Mòzǐ</i> , 'Mòjīngshuō' B 47: [智]以目見，而目以火見，而火不見。 <i>Zhuāngzǐ</i> , 'Tiānxià' 7: 目不見 <?>
「離也者天下，故獨而正。」	<i>Zhuāngzǐ</i> , 'Chōngdéfú' 1: 受命於天，唯舜獨也正 <?>

To be sure, in spite of the variety of the suggested sources of JBL listed above, none of the literal parallels encountered are from a *Buddhist* text. There can be no doubt that JBL squarely lacks any manifest traces of Buddhist impact, whether quotations from Buddhist sources or obvious terminological borrowings.

In spite of this solid evidence regarding the literal surface of JBL, I suggest in what follows that the chapter is nonetheless deeply influenced by Buddhism on another, much more substantial level. It will emerge that the line of reasoning in JBL closely resembles a widely analogous argumentation in the *Chéngshìlùn*, a Buddhist text that was translated into Chinese in the early fifth century CE and dominated intellectual discourse in Buddhist circles and beyond from the second half of the fifth and well into the sixth centuries CE.⁷⁹

⁷⁹ See *Fóguāng dà cídiǎn*, 2936–2937. On the respective 'school' (zōng 宗), see *Fóguāng dà cídiǎn*, 2932–2933. See also Tāng 1991: 718–730; Lai 1978: 339–340. Tāng Yòngtóng remarks that reports about this *śāstra* had already reached China during the Eastern Jin period (317–420 CE). Tāng quotes the retrospective (and ideologically tainted) account by the *Madhyamaka* scholar Jizàng 吉藏 (549–623) that it was for this reason that the king of the short-lived Western Qin (385–431 CE) dynasty asked Kumārajīva to translate this *sūtra*, and

However, before our excursion into the historical and intellectual contexts of the *Chéngshílùn*, I would first like to provide a short – and admittedly rather schematic – sketch of the major steps in JBL’s line of argument. For this purpose, I shall concentrate on the claims of the “debater”, whose arguments are usually associated with the figure of Gōngsūn Lóng. The point of departure is the claim (T) that a *hard, white stone* is two – rather than three, as suggested by the opponent on the basis of the number of terms or concepts involved. The first four steps of the argument try to substantiate this contention by claiming that (E1) hard and white do not occur in conjunction, but arise from two different judgments (*jǔ* 舉); that (E2) this is based on different sensual perceptions (hard is present in touch, white in sight), and that therefore hard and white never concur; and as percepts – that is, without assuming an unperceivable function that unifies the two – they are unmediated, and hence (E3) self-contained (*zìcáng* 自藏) and (E4) separated or isolated (*lí* 離) from each other. The next two steps

that the latter only translated this *hīnayānic* text because it chimed with the *Madhyamaka* criticism of the *Sarvāstivāda abhidharma* (Tāng 1991: 719). Krause notes that in the Northern Wèi dynasty, *Chéngshílùn* scholarship reached its peak in the 460s (Krause 2003: 74), and he considers it likely that, in the early years after its translation, knowledge about it remained restricted to people who had studied the text with Kumārajīva or his personal students. In the south, the appreciation of the *Chéngshílùn* appears to have culminated in the last years of the fifth and the beginning of the sixth centuries, when it was already largely discredited as *hīnayānic* in the north (Krause 2003: 91). Emperor Míng 明 of the Liú Sòng 劉宋 dynasty (465–472) organized the first public lecture on the *Chéngshílùn* (Krause 2003: 140), and Xiāo Ziliáng 蕭子良 (460–494) arranged two subsequent lectures on the text and commissioned an abridged version of the treatise in 489/90, during the Qí 齊 dynasty (Krause 2003: 7, 165; see also Jansen 2000: 262). The shortening of the text reflects didactic concerns rather than a depreciation of the *sāstra* as its later critics suggested (Krause 2003: 144). The majority of Buddhist clerics in Xiāo’s entourage were followers of *Chéngshílùn* scholarship (Jansen 2000: 111), and the final years of the fifth century also mark the time when lay Buddhists and non-Buddhist scholars in southern China became involved in discussions about the treatise (Krause 2003: 106). The prominence of the *Chéngshílùn* persists well into the Liáng 梁 dynasty (502–557), and while many sources from this period already adopt a critical *Madhyamaka* perspective on it (Krause 2003: 15), Krause finds no evidence for the wholesale refutation of the treatise by Emperor Wǔ 武 (r. 502–549), as purported by the later *sānlùn* tradition, which depicted the emperor as a pointed adversary of *Chéngshílùn* scholarship (Krause 2003: 205–216). And although critical voices multiplied over the course of the sixth century, even Jízàng himself still had to argue against influential contemporary partisans of the *Chéngshílùn*, such as Zhìtuō 智脫 (541–607), at the end of the century, before tradition made him the unrivaled victor in the doctrinal controversy. The main object of criticism was the allegedly wrong understanding of the two truths (*èr dì* 二諦 or *sú dì* 俗諦 [*saṃvṛtisatya*] and *zhēn dì* 真諦 [*paramārthasatya*]) in the *Chéngshílùn* (Krause 2003: 7). The most comprehensive study on this text and related scholarship appears to be Krause 2003.

assert that (E5) hard and white, as sensual qualities that are present in different senses, do not themselves determine or define (*dìng* 定) what it is that they actualize or render manifest through their presence, and that (E6) the qualities (white, hard) located (*suǒ* 所) by their extension do not reveal the nature of their location (*zàiyú* 在於; i.e. the stone). *Either one or the other* quality contained *in that* location is perceivable, but never the location itself. These two statements hold that the senses cannot grasp *what kind of thing* it is which their presence renders manifest. The third, larger step forward in the argument then claims that (E7) the ‘self-contained’ (see E3) qualities subsist independently of their participation in concrete things, which are conceived as ‘conjunctions’ (*jiān* 兼) (and thus, we may infer, these qualities subsist outside of time and space; cf. E3). Nonetheless, (E8) admits that these qualities, *when* present to our senses, provide the basis for conceptual specification (literally ‘taking something for this’; *shì* 是). These two lines of argument thus make the case that qualities are independent of their particular manifestation in the senses and yet provide the sensual basis for judgments. (E9) then excludes the sense organs, external causes such as light or the action of hitting, as well as the combination of sense organs and external causes as the faculty that enables a person to see things. Instead, it claims that it is the mind (*shén* 神, ‘spirit’) in combination with the sense organs which recognizes things. The mind is said to recognize them by conceptually specifying a thing (a location, the stone) by predicating upon the mutually unmediated qualities (the located separates or isolates) it contains. In other words, (E9) holds that the mind is the faculty that is able to synthesize the unmediated qualities present in different senses by conceptually determining the unperceivable (and, we may assume, intellectual or conceptual) thing which subsumes both. In (E 10), the text concludes with the claim that, as self-contained isolates or separates, qualities in the world are adjusted or oriented⁸⁰ in themselves. This formulation is (also) rather vague, and I will hint at a possible interpretation below. Given this elaborate understanding of the correlation of the mind and the senses in cognition, one understands why it has evoked comparisons with eighteenth-century European epistemology.

However, as briefly indicated above, this speculation equally resembles the way in which cognition is discussed in the *Chéngshìlùn*. This text is attributed to a

80 This is my translation of *zhèng* 正. If interpreted in accordance with MSL, this term in the *GSLZ* appears to refer to the localization of entities in space. Insofar as the kind of perceptual qualities under discussion here are not correlative in themselves, their very presence defines their position.

certain Harivarman, who is said to have lived in third-century CE Kashmir.⁸¹ Unlike most early Chinese exegetes in the fifth and sixth centuries CE, later doxographers widely refuted this text due to its *hīnayānic* tenets. In contrast to the *Madhyamaka*, the “School of the Middle Path”, whose adherents promoted an inflated notion of ‘emptiness’ (*kōng* 空), it propagates a path that advances through two subsequent levels of truth and eventually culminates in the attainment of *nirvāṇa*. ‘Emptiness’ is here understood as an attitude that translates into continual efforts to annihilate all the causes of suffering. Although suffering is thus thought to have real causes, this very reality of causation also implies the possibility of turning it against itself and leading it to its final exhaustion. This “nihilistic” penchant of the *Chéngshìlùn*, which directly mirrors its substantialist assumptions, was the main target of later *māhayānic* criticism. For us, it is important to note that the text propagates a positive notion of ‘substantiality’ (*shí* 實)⁸² – even though, in the end, it attempts to overcome it. From the *Sarvāstivāda abhidharma*⁸³ it adopts the claim that all perceptible stuff or matter (*rūpa*, *sè* 色, ‘color’) is based on the ‘reality’ or ‘substantiality’ (*shí fǎ* 實法) of the integrated whole of the “four elements” (*sì dà zhǒng* 四大種).⁸⁴ Unlike entities that emerge from the mind’s conception and which are referred to by merely “nominalist” designations (*jiǎmíng* 假名), the presence of sensual qualities is considered non-conceptual and immediate. It is only due to their inherent participation in these substantial qualities that the *Chéngshìlùn* is able to consider the four elements as substantial or actual (*shí* 實) – since everything abstracted from actuality would have to be considered nominal.⁸⁵ Since they provide the material basis for the mind’s conception of empty or void objects, qualities constitute the link which refers all objects that are separated in

⁸¹ Little is known about Harivarman. He is said to have lived in third-century CE Kashmir, where he allegedly studied the *Sarvāstivāda abhidharma*. However, the reliability of his hagiography, written by Xuānchàng 玄暢 (414–497), is questionable, and it is clear that it was composed in a specifically Chinese context; see Krause 2003: 17.

⁸² For a short summary of the central doctrinal positions of the *Chéngshìlùn*, see *Fóguāng dà cídiǎn*, 2933–2936.

⁸³ For a detailed account of the development of *Sarvāstivāda* scholarship, see the comprehensive *Sarvāstivāda Buddhist Scholasticism* by Charles Willemen, Bart Dessein, and Collett Cox (Willemen et al. 1998).

⁸⁴ For a comprehensive overview of the category of *rūpa* in *Sarvāstivāda* scholasticism see ch. 8 (“The Category of Matter (*rūpa*)”) in Dhammajoti 2007: 242–272. On the inseparability of the elements, see pp. 253–256.

⁸⁵ It is crucial to note here that, unlike the *abhidharma*, the *Chéngshìlùn* does not consider these substantial or actual qualities and the four elements inherent in them as ‘existing’ (*Fóguāng dà cídiǎn*, 2934). Rather, they are neither ‘existing’ nor ‘empty’, but obviously evade conceptualization. Thus ‘substantial’ or ‘actual’ (*shí* 實) is *not* equivalent to ‘existing’ (*yǒu* 有), as the latter implies a step of abstraction and hence belongs to the dimension of the ‘suppositional’ or ‘nominal’.

the mind's imagination back to an underlying or substantial unity that is reflected in the mutual causal ties between these objects.

Interestingly for us, the third fascicle of the *Chéngshílùn* contains a discussion about the status of what appears in the Chinese translation as *jiān* 堅 ('hard'). The background to this is the claim that the four elements (earth, fire, water, and wind) are the seeds of the four *qualities* of solidity, heat, moisture, and movement.⁸⁶ "Real" solidity is thus said to arise concomitantly with any perceptible matter. The following excerpts are taken from the discussion of the substantial character of 'hardness' or 'solidity' in the *Chéngshílùn*:

[7] *Chéngshílùn*, fasc. 3, sect. 42 (T 32, no. 1646, p. 264):

自觀金石，則知是堅，觸非眼可得，是故無堅。以此因緣，軟等諸觸，亦皆無。

From looking at [a piece of] metal or a stone, you know that it is hard, but [this] tactile sensation cannot be grasped by the eye; therefore, solidity does not exist. Because of this, all tactile sensations such as softness etc. do not exist either.⁸⁷

This argument is attributed to the opposite position, which the text seeks to invalidate. It starts from the claim that someone looking at something like a stone knows that it is hard, and then proceeds to the statement that touch cannot be grasped by our eyes, eventually concluding that therefore hardness does not exist. The claim suggests that one cannot know a stone's hardness merely by seeing it. Since this attribute lacks a sensual basis, the argument seems to suggest that it has to be refuted as unsubstantiated and hence nonexistent. By means of analogy, this claim is then generalized for all other tactile qualities. Strikingly, not only the crucial terms, but the very structure of the argument itself closely resembles JBL: a stone cannot be said to be hard because sight, on the basis of which we allegedly recognize the stone, is incapable of grasping its hardness. Just like JBL, the above argument then concludes that tactile qualities simply do not exist. Note, however, that here this is apparently meant as a generalization, while JBL only claims that hardness does not exist *in sight*. Still, the pivotal terms – albeit not their

⁸⁶ The four elements are considered to form unitary atoms, which are considered to be without parts and dimensionless. While their proportion is thus constant, they are thought to vary in their capability (*sāmatthiya*); cf. Ronkin 2005: 56–57.

⁸⁷ Krause criticizes Sastri's English translation of the *Chéngshílùn* as incomplete and imprecise (Krause 2003: 17). Nevertheless, I provide it here for comparison with my own suggestions: "On looking at things like the gold and the stone one knows that this is hard. No touch can be cognized by the eye. Therefore, hardness does not exist. For the same reason, softness, etc. are also not there as separate elements"; Sastri 1978: 86.

interpretation – such as ‘to grasp’ (*dé* 得) or ‘to not exist’ (*wú* 無),⁸⁸ as well as the quality (‘hard’) and the object (‘stone’) discussed, are the same as in JBL.⁸⁹

Before looking at the text’s explication of the reasons why sight cannot know about hardness and why this is no proof against the existence of the latter, let us first have a look at how the *Chéngshílùn* argues in favor of the existence of ‘hardness’:

[8] *Chéngshílùn*, fasc. 3, sect. 43 (p. 264):

[...] 人見欽拔羅，生疑為堅為軟。是故，觸非眼可見。是故，有堅等諸觸，又實有堅等。

[...] 若無堅者，何所分別。

If a person sees a woolen blanket,⁹⁰ this raises doubts as to whether it is hard or soft. Because of this, [we know that] tactile sensations are nothing that can be seen by the eye. [But] because of this [we also know that], if there are tactile sensations of solidity etc., there also really is solidity etc.⁹¹

[...] If there were nothing solid, by which means/how would we distinguish?⁹²

In the above passage, the author of the *Chéngshílùn* admits that sight does not allow one to ascertain the tactile quality of a piece of fabric before one’s eyes. As a consequence, sight lacks the means to settle this question. However, the very fact – simply claimed by the *Chéngshílùn* – that there are sensations of hardness (among others) allows one to conclude that these tactile qualities are substantial, and hence *really exist*.⁹³ This is eventually further corroborated by

⁸⁸ However, the *Chéngshílùn* uses a distinctly medieval vocabulary, such as e.g. *yǎn* 眼 – originally ‘pupil of the eye’ – rather than *mù* 目 for ‘eye’.

⁸⁹ When the *Chéngshílùn* repeats this claim for refutation, it reformulates it as: “Seeing a stone you know [its] hardness” (見石知堅; fasc. 3, sect. 43, p. 264), leaving out the second example of a lump of metal.

⁹⁰ This is a transcription of Skrt. *kambala*, for which see Monier-Williams 1872: 204a.

⁹¹ “The person, again looking at the ‘rug’ (*kambala*) doubts whether it is hard or soft. Therefore, the touch is not visible”; Sastri 1978: 87. Unfortunately, Sastri leaves the last sentence untranslated.

⁹² “If hardness does not exist, what would be discriminated?”; Sastri 1978: 87.

⁹³ This is reminiscent of a cognitive primacy of tactile sensation with regard to the four elements, as documented e.g. in Paramārtha’s commentary on and translation of the *Abhidharmakośa* (阿毘達磨俱舍釋論 *Āpidāmōjūshè shílùn*; T 1559, trans. 566–567 CE). It reads: “These four elements I only identify as the cause of touch. The four qualities, such as hard etc., are nothing the eye etc. sees. [...] Touch I identify as [something] entering from outside, or I identify it as the four

the implicit contention that such substantial qualities in fact underlie all distinctions of objects. Refuting them entails the negation of the very possibility of knowing about any distinctions at all. Our text thus suggests that the sensation of hardness in touch has an immediacy which directly bespeaks its substantiality, and it further holds that such sensations are also the basis for distinguishing between different objects.

As we have seen above, JBL does not turn its initial claim about the unmediated character of qualities sensed by different organs into anything like a refutation of the cognitive relevance of perception. Rather, it claims that when a quality is present – or, in the language of the *Chéngshílùn*, when it actually or “really exists” (*shí yǒu* 實有) – it provides the ‘basis’ (*yīn* 因) for judgments, which in turn underlie all conceptual distinction. Again, JBL makes a similar point to the *Chéngshílùn*, which also considers qualities the basis of conscious distinctions. Also, just as in JBL, after discussing eyesight, the above passage shifts the focus to touch, to which it accords an analogous function of accessing qualities – though tactile rather than visible ones. The discussion of tactile qualities continues as follows:

[9] *Chéngshílùn*, fasc. 3, sect. 43 (p. 264):

[...] 亦所作業異，謂打、擲等。

Moreover, the actions it effectuates are different; one could name hitting, throwing away, etc.⁹⁴

[...] 又以能持因緣，故名為堅。又能障礙手等，故名為堅。

Again, it is because it is able to be a conditioning cause of bearing (namely as the object borne) that one names it solid. And it is because it is able to block one’s hands and other things that one names it solid.⁹⁵

This passage illustrates the doctrinal relevance of the claim about the substantiality of qualities such as hardness. Qualities provide the substantial conditions and causes that enable or prevent certain human actions. For this reason,

elements; in some cases it is [only] based on the four elements; I identify it as *what is produced by the four elements*.” From this perspective, colors – just like certain tactile sensations, such as ‘smoothness’ – are only produced by the elements, but they are not the elements themselves; see T 29, 1559, fasc. 1, p. 168; cf. Willemen et. al. 1998: 136.

⁹⁴ Sastri, again rather freely, has: “It causes its own thought. The act of chiselling and chopping, etc. is directed towards the hard thing”; Sastri 1978: 87.

⁹⁵ “There is hardness because it is the causing factor of retention, *Sandhāraṇa* and because it obstructs our hand and others”; Sastri 1978: 87.

names for qualities are not void, but rather designate something real or substantial. In spite of the crucial importance of this argument in the context of the *Chéngshílùn* – it allows one to understand why the assumption of a substantial base of perception, and hence of language, is crucial to the very possibility of karmic retribution and thus Buddhist liberation – it has no equivalent in JBL's argument. However, given the overall similarity of both the structure and the line of argument in JBL with what the *Chéngshílùn* discusses here, it is still plausible that its reflections on the role of the hand and the resistance by which it senses hardness in cognition mirror the above passage, where both the hand and its potential to perceive obstruction are readily available.

Now that we have delineated the *Chéngshílùn*'s argument in support of the existence of tactile qualities such as hardness and softness, we can return to the opponent's claim, which this argument attempts to refute. So far, we have only learned that the *Chéngshílùn* accepts its adversaries' contention that sight does not recognize tactile qualities, and hence has to leave open the question of whether a stone that one sees is indeed hard. The following is the explanation of why the adversaries are allegedly wrong:

[10] *Chéngshílùn*, fasc. 3, sect. 43 (p. 264):

不可以眼知堅，以先觸故比知。如見火知熱，熱非可見。

[Refutation] You cannot know hardness by your eyes; it is by previous tactile sensations that you know it by analogy, just as when you see a fire and know that it is hot, this hotness cannot be seen.⁹⁶

In other words, the propagators of the substantiality of qualities readily admit that the connection between the sight of a stone and the knowledge of its hardness is not one of immediate sense perception. Yet this is not tantamount to directly confuting hardness as a quality of the stone.⁹⁷ The evidence for this claim is not sensual, but rather arrived at by inference – or more precisely, by

⁹⁶ “The last argument that hardness on looking at stone, etc. [is] experienced by the eye is also invalid. It is not at all experienced by the eye, but it is inferred in the wake of contact with things, gold, etc. We, e.g. understand the heat on looking at the fire. But the heat is not visible”; Sastri 1978: 87.

⁹⁷ It should be emphasized that this formulation inverts the situation as conceived by the *Chéngshílùn*: there, it is the sensual qualities, the material basis of distinction, which are fundamental, while the stone is but a secondary nominal distinction superimposed on them. Thus, in a way, speaking about the quality or even the attribute of a stone distorts the ontological hierarchy suggested in the Buddhist text – at least if it is supposed to imply the underlying existence of a stone as the substance bearing these qualities.

analogy to previous tactile perceptions of the hardness of stones. Inference, however, is something which is rightly based on sensual perceptions but which is, in a way, superordinate to them, as it is able to bridge the gap between the mutually exclusive domains of the various senses. Just like JBL, the *Chéngshílùn* presents the mind as the faculty able to synthesize the various sense perceptions into a unified object, although here this is termed ‘heart’ (*xīn* 心) or ‘thinking and cognition’ (*yìshí* 意識) rather than ‘spirit’ (*shén* 神).

However, the superordinate character of its synthesis is no source of higher appreciation – quite the contrary. In one passage, the faculty in charge of analogical inference and synthesis is presented as follows:

[11] *Chéngshílùn*, fasc. 11 (p. 328):

意識於眾生等中動謂，心是眾生，色等是瓶，離色有瓶，如是等。實法中心定不動，不得言我見色亦見聲等。

In their relation to the manifold beings, thinking and cognition become active, engaging in assertion, so that, when the mind specifies (any of the) manifold beings, the color (sensual qualities; lit. *rūpa*) is (e.g.) specified as a jar, so that it (= mind) has (or: “in the mind there is”), separated from the sensual qualities, a jar. In actual entities, the mind is still and inactive, and it is not possible to say (here) that an ‘I’ is seeing color, perceiving (lit. seeing) sound and the like.⁹⁸

According to the *Chéngshílùn*, the colors and sounds that provide the material substance of our concepts of reality are provided independently of the mind’s activities. It is in fact precisely this which establishes their real or substantial, rather than merely construed or superimposed character. In contrast, the conception of things in thought involves the activity of thought and cognition. This activity is said to consist in predicating on or ‘designating’ (*wèi* 謂) the material presented by the senses. In this way, the mind ‘specifies’ (*shì* 是) qualities as

⁹⁸ Sastri’s translation differs considerably. In order to account for the substantial deviations from the Chinese text, a closer look at the re-sanskritized version underlying Sastri’s English translation would seem necessary. In view of the merely illustrative character of this example, I shall forego the detailed investigations this would require. What is more, my own translation – which is exclusively based on the Chinese version – appears to me not only more consistent, but also more tied up with the topic under consideration. Sastri translates as follows: “Likewise, non-sensuous consciousness wavers in regard to *sattva* etc. whether the body is the *sattva* or the mind is so and also in regard to a pitcher whether the visible etc. are the pitcher or it is other than the visible, etc. The mind does not waver in regard to the absolute thing. One can say: I see the visible, but he cannot say: I hear the visible”; Sastri 1978: 338.

individual members of certain classes of things, such as jars. Such objects exist only in the mind, and they are supplementary to – and separate from – the sensual basis of perception, which is substantial and on which they rely. Such complex entities arising from the mind's synthesis are only nominal, and hence considered essentially void or empty.

While JBL hardly allows for overly far-reaching conclusions regarding its relationship to the *Chéngshílùn*, the similarities are still striking. First, on a terminological level, we have here a use of the word *wèi* 謂 (lit. 'to call') which, however, is clearly related to the specification of objects by means of names (or rather: concepts) – that is, it is used metaphorically for processes such as forming judgments, which are considered internal or mental. This is precisely how the word is used in JBL 7, where it occurs in the phrase "*wèi shí*" 謂石 (meaning 'to determine', rather than to designate, the hard as a stone), parallel to the preceding "*jiàn shí*" 見石 ('to see', i.e. 'to recognize as a stone'). Similarly, and unlike other contemporary texts, the *Chéngshílùn* uses *shì* 是 not as a copula, but in its older sense of a verb meaning 'to specify as' or 'to identify/classify as a specific kind of thing' in the passage quoted above, a usage which is arguably also present in JBL.

Second, crucial aspects of the arguments presented in JBL are equally manifest in the *Chéngshílùn* passages just discussed. The claim in [7] against which the *Chéngshílùn* argues holds that the quality of 'hardness' attributed to a stone cannot arise from sight. And it infers from this that, due to a lack of sensual evidence, 'hardness' does not exist at all. The premise of this challenged contention is that sight and touch perceive separate entities (a stone and hardness, respectively), which neither sense is able to mediate with the other. This is evidently equivalent to the debater's claim (E2) in JBL that 'hard' and 'white' are separate items that appear to different senses, and it implies what JBL makes explicit in (E4) – namely, that items manifest in sight and items perceptible to touch are unconnected, and hence separated from each other. The claim in [7] further seems to presuppose that the existence of things has to be warranted by one single sense, which closely resembles JBL's view, presented in (E1), that the identification of a stone via qualities provided by two discrete senses arises from two separate sensual judgments, and that therefore the stone's hardness does not exist according to our sight, whereas its whiteness is beyond the grasp of our touch. Hence, what is provided through the different senses are different things. And although the arguments of the *Chéngshílùn* in support of the existence of tactile qualities [8] have no direct equivalent in JBL, we can at least observe that JBL seems to subscribe to the view that what the senses present to us is in fact "real". Thus, like the *Chéngshílùn*, JBL does not accept the assumption

that the absence of hardness in sight is conclusive evidence for the non-existence of hardness. Rather, JBL limits the term *wú* 無 (‘to not have’) to the various sensual domains: *sight* does not have hardness; *touch* has no whiteness. However, this is not a judgment about the existence of the object(s) expressed through these qualities. In [11], when the *Chéngshílùn* eventually presents ‘mind’ (*xīn* 心; lit. ‘heart’) as the faculty which identifies those qualities that are immediately present in the senses as instances of certain kinds of things, this (as noted above) is obviously reflected in JBL’s claim (E9) that it is the ‘mind’ (*shén* 神; lit. ‘spirit’) which assembles the various qualities as disclosed through different senses to constitute a unified object (the ‘thing’). Thus, [11] also shows that the *Chéngshílùn* agrees with JBL (E8) in considering the qualities present to our senses as the material basis for the mind’s conceptualizing activities. This means that the *Chéngshílùn* also implies what JBL claims in (E5) and (E6) – namely, that the perceptible sensual qualities do not determine the thing which they render manifest, and that the senses are therefore unable to disclose this thing (the ‘location’) in its entirety.⁹⁹ When the *Chéngshílùn* eventually asserts that the presence of these qualities is entirely independent of the activities of the cognizing mind, it implies that they constitute an independent realm of their own, which is essentially separate from the mind. This, however, is tantamount to claiming that the qualities are real, irrespective of whether they are objects of the conceptualizing function of the mind, or as JBL (E3) has it, that – from the perspective of the mind – they are self-contained, and as JBL (E7) holds, that these qualities exist (or rather ‘subsist’) independently of the ‘things’ which the mind conceives based on them. Even JBL’s rather opaque claim that qualities are self-contained and separate entities “adjusted in themselves” may point toward the *Chéngshílùn*: there, not only is the presence of qualities argued to be independent of the mind’s conceptualizing activity, but qualities are also grounded on the non-perceptual basis provided by the elementary fundamental qualities – such as ‘hardness’ – through which the four elements (earth, fire, water, and wind) are thought to provide the material texture of the world.

⁹⁹ It should be emphasized that, from the perspective of the *Chéngshílùn*, this formulation is possibly overly assertive. Even if it admits the reality of the things we capture with nominal designations such as ‘cart’ or ‘jar’, it only does so in a qualified sense, because of the fact that it admits that there is a substantial basis on which they are “superimposed” by the mind. Thus the mind does not actually disclose, but rather construes things – so that the reality of its constructions is only indirect, as this hinges on the actuality of the underlying sensual basis and the reality of the causal efficacy this basis expresses.

It goes without saying that, in spite of these astonishing similarities, JBL – and, to a lesser degree, the *Chéngshìlùn* as well – simply remain too vague in too many respects for us to determine the precise nature of these remarkable parallels. However, that this similarity in their argumentative frameworks is accompanied by a considerable overlap, both in parts of the technical vocabulary and in the choice of examples, suggests that this is indeed the result of JBL reflecting discussions found in the *Chéngshìlùn* (or related texts), rather than an entirely accidental convergence of two mutually independent reasonings about qualities, objects, and their mutual relationship.

As we have seen, the Buddhist text emphasizes that while sensual qualities as the material basis of cognition are unconditioned by an individual mind, this mind is to be held responsible for the processes of thought and cognition. On this basis, the mind abstracts objects such as jars, to which we might add stones, pieces of cloth, or (as the following example shows) horses. These objects, the text states, exist in the mind, separated or ‘abstracted’ (*lí* 離) from the material base which has conditioned their construction. In other words, the text presents a picture of the basic ingredients and processes of cognition which establishes the same fundamental line between ‘color’ (the material basis of conception given in perception) and the objects of conception (illustrated here by the stock example of the jar) which JBL draws between the qualities of hard and white on the one hand, and the concept of stone on the other, and which BML fixes between white and horse, ‘color’ and ‘shape’.

However, we should also note that JBL uses the crucial term ‘separation’ in a very different sense than the *Chéngshìlùn*. In the Buddhist text, this term is used to designate the abstract status of ‘object concepts’ in the mind, as opposed to the concrete presence of qualities to the senses, while JBL arguably conceives of this as a relation that holds between qualities belonging to different senses, such as ‘white’ and ‘hard’. In spite of an overlap in the basic lines of argument, as well as some degree of convergence in terminology, the positions of the *Chéngshìlùn* and JBL thus obviously do not simply coincide. As I have already suggested, the latter’s thought was most probably influenced by, but certainly not simply copied from, the Buddhist precedent.

However, there is one surprising detail about the use of the term ‘separation’ in the *GSLZ* that seems relevant to the question of its possible date of compilation. In the following example, the *Chéngshìlùn* illustrates how the mind wavers between various possibilities when it attempts to determine or conceptually grasp the material laid open to the senses – something which is directly reflected in people’s conflicting opinions about what it is they see:

[12] *Chéngshílùn*, fasc. 11 (p. 328):

如人見馬或言見馬尾。或言見馬身。或言見皮。或言見毛。

It is like when people see a horse, some say they see a horsetail, some say they see a horse body, some say they see the skin, some say they see the coat.¹⁰⁰

The origin of such divergence or uncertainty lies in the fact that nominal designations for objects as construed by the mind are ‘abstracted’ (*lí*) from the sensual basis of perception and persist in the mind as ‘separated’ or ‘abstracted’ (*lí*) items (cf. [11] above). Their application to what the senses present at any given moment relies on their assignment to this sensual material by the activity of the mind. This lack of immediacy and certainty in nominal designations contrasts with the immediate presence of the qualities to our senses. As I have mentioned above, the crucial term *lí* 離 (‘separate’) in the extant *GSLZ* occurs not only in JBL, but also in BML. There we find the following explanation of why one cannot infer the presence of a horse from the presence of a white horse, while at the same time, the presence of a white horse does not allow one to claim the absence of a horse:

[13] *GSLZ*, ‘Báimǎlùn’ (DZ/1172/1/7r/4–5):

曰：有白馬，不可謂無馬者，離白之謂也。不離者有白馬不可謂有馬也。

A: That, when there is a white horse, it is inadmissible to assert that there is no horse, is due to its being an assertion which abstracts (separates) from white. When we don’t abstract (separate), it is inadmissible to assert that there is a horse, when there is a white horse.

This short passage is all BML has to say about ‘abstraction’. Yet, in spite of its extreme brevity, we clearly see that this use of *lí* 離 (‘to abstract’ or ‘to separate’) not only differs from JBL, but that – surprisingly enough – it is actually in

100 The horse example illustrates the view that, unlike *rūpa* (sè 色), the sensual qualities we immediately perceive (lit. ‘find’), the objects construed by the mind (*xīn* 心; *prajñapti*) are conceptually mediated. While qualities are thought to disclose singularities, nominal designations refer to complex mental constructions. One and the same phenomenon can be determined to belong to different kinds of things. Here there is an aspect of variety, polyvalence, ambiguity, and hence instability, that is absent in the case of qualities. Sastri translates the passage above as follows: “In respect of *prajñapti*, the mind wavers; e.g. a man seeing the horse says: I see the horse. Another man says: I see the body of the horse; still another says: I see the skin”; Sastri 1978: 338.

accordance with the analysis of the *Chéngshílùn* [11]. As we saw in that passage, separation refers to abstracting, from a concrete sensual impression, the bare *notion* of a jar. Accordingly, we draw, from a white patch presented to our eyes, an ‘abstracted’ – and sensually emptied – notion of ‘horse’. Thus, what does not exist “out there” is not the flesh-and-blood horse, but the purely mental notion of ‘horse’.

Now, one might ask what sense it makes to compare one of the apparently “genuine” parts of the *GSLZ* with a Buddhist text whose translation dates from the early fifth century CE. Instead of a detailed argument, I restrict myself to pointing out two things. For one although the textual materials from which the extant BML has been composed show no obvious traces of post-Hàn language use, it has long been observed that the text is marked by ruptures and inconsistencies which could well result from later editorial interferences.¹⁰¹ For another, one of the caesuras in BML is marked by a causal construction of the form [yǐ 以 + clause (cause) wèi 謂 + clause (effect)], which seems unparalleled in other pre-imperial and Hàn texts. It appears to have evolved from the construction [yǐ 以 + clause (cause) gù 故, wèi 謂 + clause (effect)], which was common in the early medieval period, and strikingly enough, it is attested in this form precisely in the *Chéngshílùn*.¹⁰² If this particular construction is indeed a trace of medieval editorial intrusion, it is thus certainly imaginable that its originator(s) also integrated into the piece a then-current explanatory pattern that would lend itself to making good sense of one of Gōngsūn Lóng’s crucial claims about the white horse. In view of the fragmentary and isolated character of these pieces of evidence, we can hardly hope to be able to settle this question of possible medieval traces in the extant BML with any degree of certainty. However, what remains extraordinary in the present case is the fact that BML uses the term *lǐ* in a different way than JBL, and that it is the former, which – unlike JBL – is free of more manifest signs of Buddhist influence or inspiration, which seems to share the Buddhist use of the term.

As I have shown in the second section of this chapter, extensive passages of JBL are copied from or modeled on the Mohist ‘Canons’ and ‘Explanations’. And although the figure of Gōngsūn Lóng as a debater (*biànzhe* 辯者) has been consistently associated with the topic of “hard and white” since his first occurrences in pre-imperial sources, the specific example of their interpenetration in a stone is restricted to the ‘Explanations’.¹⁰³ The Mohists use the expression “hard–white” as a technical term for the coextension of two different items,

¹⁰¹ Cf. Graham 1965: 135, passim; Hé Qīmín 1967: 220–222; Amano 1967, esp. 131–132.

¹⁰² For details, see Suter, forthcoming.

¹⁰³ ‘Jingshuōxià’ B 4 (DZ/1176/13r=299/4.17–6.2). See [3b], p. 440 above.

but nothing suggests that they related this term to the kinds of epistemological problems raised in JBL.¹⁰⁴ Still, our discussion suggests that it is almost certainly from the ‘Explanations’ that the compiler of JBL adopted this example. Assuming that the Mohist ‘Canons’ are pre-imperial, they would be the only early witness pointing toward a possible problem to which this expression might originally have referred. While Wáng Chōng – in the first century CE, in one of the earliest records of a treatise by Gōngsūn Lóng – gives its title as ‘Hard and White’, we can observe, at the same time, that ever since the white horse topic came to be connected with the figure of Gōngsūn Lóng in the mid-Hàn period, commentators have been associating the ancient problem of “hard and white” with the theme of the white horse.¹⁰⁵ To my knowledge, the only explicit collocation of the terms ‘white’, ‘hard’, and ‘stone’ in ancient and early medieval sources is in Sīmǎ Biāo’s 司馬彪 (d. 306 CE) commentary on the *Zhuāngzǐ*, which simply treats “hard stone” as an example analogous to “white horse”.¹⁰⁶ Thus, unlike JBL – and, for that matter, the Mohist ‘Canons’ – he does not address ‘hard’ and ‘white’ in terms of ‘attributes’ qualifying a stone. And as we have just seen, the passages from the *Chéngshìlùn* which we have discussed thus far, in spite of the fact that they address the problem of “seeing a hard stone”, do not mention the term ‘white’ at all. However, there is one passage in which our Buddhist text does in fact mention the Chinese equivalent of “white stone” (*bái shí* 白石), though in a very peculiar context:

[14] *Chéngshìlùn*, fasc. 3, sect. 43 (p. 264):

如嘗白石蜜味，以黑石蜜為苦。嘗呵梨勒味以黑石蜜為甘。若以相待故無，則味亦無。問曰：黑石蜜中，有二種味，亦甘亦苦。答曰：疊中亦有二觸，亦堅亦軟。

If you taste the flavor of white stone sugar,¹⁰⁷ you deem black stone sugar bitter. If you taste the flavor of a *harītakī* pill, you deem black stone sugar sweet. If you [infer] that, because [sweet and bitter] are relative to each other, they do not exist, then flavor does not exist either. There was a question: “Are there, inside black stone sugar, two kinds of flavor, both

104 ‘Jingxià’ B 4 (DZ/1176/10/2v=278/10). On “hard-and-white”, see e.g. Graham 1956/7: 180; Graham 1967; Hé 1967: 168–181. See also [3b], p. 440 above.

105 Graham 1956/7: 175; Graham 1967: 366; Hé Qīmín 1967: 220.

106 Graham 1956/7: 178.

107 The production of jaggery involves the addition of limestone. The Chinese term *shí mì* (lit. “stone sugar”) thus most probably refers to jaggery. I thank Samira Müller for bringing this to my attention.

sweet and bitter?” I answer: “In a piece of cloth there are also two [sensations] of touch, both hardness and softness.”¹⁰⁸

Regardless of how one translates the term *shímì* 石密 (lit. ‘stone honey’), it is clear that it refers to a sugarloaf rather than a stone. Moreover, it is also clear that this passage is talking about taste rather than sight. The optical property of the “white stone sugar” plays no role – as white probably refers to the color of the limestone used to produce the sugarloaf rather than to one of its properties. What the passage discusses is the question of whether the qualities sensed by the taste buds are real. Analogous to the argument about the reality of ‘hardness’ in [8] above, the *Chéngshílùn* holds that they are. The claim that sweetness and bitterness reflect something substantial, which is immediately present in taste, is then explicitly compared to the analogous example of the presence of hardness in a piece of cloth. And it is here, in terms of vocabulary, that the word ‘hard’ comes into play. Thus, although a sugarloaf is arguably hard, the example of the “white stone sugar” containing the relevant phrase “white stone” does not occur as an example of solidity. Neither sight nor touch, the crucial senses involved in JBL, are of immediate relevance to this example. At the same time, the example of the sweet (or bitter) sugarloaf is *compared* to the analogon of a hard (or soft) textile. Furthermore, the example is raised in the larger context of a passage arguing for the substantial status of ‘hardness’ as an elementary quality. In sum, despite gathering the relevant words, the passage is at best only faintly related to the hard white stone of the Mohists. Yet it is still possible that the collocation of the crucial terms ‘white’, ‘stone’, and ‘hard’ in this *Chéngshílùn* passage may have reminded a putative Chinese reader familiar with the ‘Canons’ of the example of the two qualities coextensive in a stone. If so, it would come as no surprise that a scholar aware of both the *Chéngshílùn* and the Mohist ‘Canons’ might have come up with the idea of addressing the problem of the inseparability of the hard white stone in terms of the mutual relationship of different senses and their common connection to the mind.

That this is in fact plausible is suggested by one of the earliest textual witnesses on Gōngsūn Lóng scholarship from the early Táng period. Dating from the year 672 CE, the report, entitled *An Essay on the Gōngsūn Lóngzǐ* (*Nǐ Gōngsūn Lóngzǐ lùn* 擬公孫龍子論), is the first source to mention all the chapter titles in the

¹⁰⁸ Sastri summarizes the passage and renders it as follows: “The person, e.g. who has tasted the sugar-candy feels other tastes unsweet. The person having tasted *haritaki* feels sweet taste of things other than the sugar-candy. If the relative things do not exist, then the taste itself will become a non-entity. If you say that things other than the sugar-candy have two tastes, the piece of cloth also will have two sorts of touch; hard and soft”; Sastri 1978: 87.

extant *GSLZ* by name. In it, the narrator reports what he did the day after his erudite host presented him with a copy of the *GSLZ* during a learned conversation:

[15] *Nǐ Gōngsūn Lóngzǐ lùn* 擬公孫龍子論,¹⁰⁹ *Quán Táng wén*:¹¹⁰

遂和墨襞紙，援翰寫心，篇卷字數，皆不踰公孫之作。人物義理，皆反取公孫之意。觸類而長，隨方而說。質明而作，日中而就。以事源代迹府，因意而存義也。以幸食代白馬，尋色而推味也；以慮心代指物，自外而明內也；以達化代通變，緣文而轉稱也；以香辛代堅白，馮遠而取近也；以稱足代名實，居中而擬正也。或因數陳色，或反色在數，或棄色取味，或以氣轉形，明天下之言，無所不及也。發沉源而迴驚，闢榛路以先驅，庶將來君子，有以知其用心也。¹¹¹

Afterwards I rubbed my ink and folded my paper, took up my brush and wrote down my thoughts. In all the many characters across chapters and scrolls, I did not go beyond the work of Gōngsūn [Lóng]. In terms of persons and things, meanings and patterns, I consistently referred back to Gōngsūn's intention. I unfolded my thought in analogies of kind (lit. in touch with the kinds of things) and I elucidated them following the method [of Gōngsūn]. I started writing at dawn and had completed the piece by noon. When I replaced 'repository of traces' (= the title of the introductory chapter) with 'tracking actions', I followed his [= Gōngsūn's] intention and preserved his sense. When I replaced 'white horse' with 'delicious food', I transferred the inquiry into color to (the domain of) taste; when I replaced 'pointing things' with 'projecting mind', I turned away from the outside to elucidate the inside; when I replaced 'understanding alternation' with 'capturing change', I relied on the text and substituted the formulations; when I replaced 'hard white' with 'fragrant bitter/hot', I removed what is distant and chose what is nearby; when I replaced 'reality of names' with 'sufficiency of designations', I kept to the balance and sketched what is correct. Sometimes I exposed color on the basis of mental constructions,¹¹²

109 *Qin ding Quán Táng wén*, fasc. 987, 26r–28v, in *Quán Táng wén* 1965: vol. 20: 12921–12922.

110 *Quán Táng wén* 1965: 12922.

111 Cf. Hé 1967: 214–216; see also the translation in Kandel 1974: 134–135. Kandel considers this section a continuation of the preceding quotation. On this basis, he assumes that the “followers of Gōngsūn Lóng” mentioned there are the implicit subject of this passage. I think that the passage rather relates what the author did the day after his discussion with his host.

112 *Shù* 數 (lit. ‘number’) in Buddhist contexts is also a technical term for ‘knowledge’ or ‘mental content’ (cf. Soothill/Hodous 1937: 438). The term *xīnshù* is an alternative designation for *xīnsuǒ* 心所 (Skt. *caitasika*; ‘mental concomitants’). It is therefore imaginable that what the author describes here is the game of combining sensual qualities (such as ‘white’) with mental

sometimes I turned color back into the position of mental construction, sometimes I discarded color and chose taste, sometimes I replaced body/shape with breath/stuff/*qì*. In explaining the sayings of the world, there is nothing which could not be captured (like this). Tapping a well as profound as this, [Gōngsūn] was unrivaled, breaching this path he was a vanguard. If only future gentlemen will recognize his intention!

However enthusiastic this flowery passage may appear, it does not tell us much about how its author interpreted the *GSLZ*. Still, it is clear that there was a practice of varying the text attributed to the master, not least by substituting terms from one domain or category with terms chosen from another. The author explicitly mentions varying color by substituting taste, an example he illustrates with the replacement of ‘white’ with ‘delicious’ (*xìng* 幸) in the expression “white horse” (*bái mǎ* 白馬) and, notably, with ‘bitter/hot’ (*xīn* 辛) in the phrase “hard white”! This early witness of Gōngsūn Lóng scholarship thus clearly testifies that, among his self-declared followers, there were people analogizing the sensual domains of sight and touch, as illustrated in the extant *GSLZ* with the age-old example of “hard and white”, with the dimensions of smell and taste. Of course, we have no chance of clarifying whether this practice was inspired by or even connected to the discussions about the relation of sensual perception and conception in Buddhist texts such as the *Chéngshìlùn*. Nonetheless, it seems plausible that someone who was used to this game of varied analogies and who came across modes of reasoning like those in the *Chéngshìlùn* sections discussed above would readily adapt them, possibly even without grasping – or being interested in – the details of their philosophical backgrounds. It is hardly imaginable that such a person would have had any qualms in associating the Buddhist piece about the sweet “white stone sugar” (or: ‘jaggery’) with the “hard, white stone” of the Mohists, or with the ingenuity of Gōngsūn Lóng, which allegedly enabled the debater to disentangle “hard and white”.

That there might indeed be more to this connection between the playful variation of terms from different sensual spheres in the *Essay on the Gōngsūn Lóngzǐ* and Buddhist texts is suggested by another source. In the mid-seventh century CE, the scholar-monk Xuánzàng 玄奘 (602–664) directed the translation of the major works of the *Sarvāstivāda abhidharma*.¹¹³ The following

constructions (such as ‘horse’), as described in the *Chéngshìlùn*, and as arguably inspired by JBL and BML’s distinction between the qualities hard and white as against a stone and ‘color’ vs. ‘form’, respectively.

113 For the history of *abhidharma* studies in China, see Willemen et al. 1998: 131–137; Dessein 2010: 50–54.

passage from the *Abhidharmamahāvibhāṣāśāstra* (T 1545)¹¹⁴ discusses the relationship between the distinctive marks (*lakṣaṇa*, xiàng 相) of discrete phenomena and what *Sarvāstivādins* consider their “real” basis – namely, causal efficacy (*kāritra*, yè 業),¹¹⁵ the four elements (*mahābhūta*, dàzhǒng 大種),¹¹⁶ and the matter derived from them, which provides the material basis of perception (*upādāya-rūpa*, zào sè 造色).¹¹⁷

[16] *Abhidharmamahāvibhāṣāśāstra*, fasc. 127 (T 27, no. 1545, p. 664):

問諸內外事其相各別。內事別者。謂諸衆生若百若干集會一處威儀形相各不同。外事別者。謂果石等。或青或黃或赤或白。香味等相各各不同。如是相別。爲由業異。爲由大種異。爲由造色異。

Let me ask: Now, each and every mark of all inner and outer phenomena is distinct. As for the distinctness of the inner phenomena, I say that each and every one of the sentient beings [even] when one hundred or one thousand [of them] gather at one place are not the same in their forms of conduct.¹¹⁸ *As for the distinctness of the outer phenomena, I say that a fruit, a stone, etc. is sometimes green, sometimes yellow, sometimes red, and sometimes white, that its scent, taste, etc. in each and every case are not the same.* As they are distinct like this, do you consider them different from karmic efficacy, do you consider them different from the four elements, do you consider them different from derived matter?

The text here uses the fruit, along with the stock example of the *stone*, to illustrate the ‘mode of being’ (*bhava*, lèi 類)¹¹⁹ of derived matter; those modes of being which are conceived of as ‘shared marks’ (*gòngxiàng* 共相) are contrasted with the particularized *qualities* or tropes the senses perceive them as, the ‘individual marks’ (*zìxiàng* 自相),¹²⁰ which are exemplified by the four cardinal

¹¹⁴ This is a copious commentary on the *Jñānaprasthāna*. On its extant translations into Chinese, see Willemen et al. 1998: 118–119, and for a detailed discussion, pp. 229–239. The authors note that there is no easy way to identify the root text on which the different recensions are based (p. 234).

¹¹⁵ See Dhammajoti 2007: 252.

¹¹⁶ Dhammajoti 2007: 251–253.

¹¹⁷ Dhammajoti 2007: 249–251.

¹¹⁸ Lit. ‘respect inspiring deportment’; Soothill/Hodous 1937: 299.

¹¹⁹ See Westerhoff 2018: 64; cf. T 1545 (*Abhidharmamahāvibhāṣāśāstra*), fasc. 77, p. 396.

¹²⁰ More precisely, individual marks are not only perceived by the senses, but also conceived by mind: “Eye consciousness grasps the individual mark, thought consciousness (*manas*) grasps both the individual and the shared marks” (T 1545, fasc. 133, p. 689; 眼識取自相, 意識取自相共相。).

colors accepted by the *Sarvāstivādins* – namely green, yellow, red, and *white*. The question at the end of the passage shows that it is dedicated to the relationship between such distinct phenomena and the underlying but unperceivable elements of earth, water, fire, and air, as well as their distinctive marks of hardness, moisture, heat, and movement. Furthermore, on *hardness*, the *Abhidharmamahāvibhāṣāśāstra* elsewhere clearly states that it is from this ‘intrinsic nature’ (*svabhāva*, *zìxìng* 自性) that touch (*sparśa*, *chù* 觸) – as opposed to the other senses – is able to derive the substantiality (*tǐ* 體) of the element of earth.¹²¹ Thus this short passage not only assembles the two crucial terms ‘stone’ and ‘white’ and relates them to derived tactile matter such as hardness – just as the *Essay on the Gōngsūn Lóngzǐ* it moreover complements the dimension of color with the sensual spheres of taste and smell, although these are presented differently from sight in that the text simply mentions these senses instead of listing the prototypical qualities they provide. As we have seen above, the *Essay* was composed in the 670s, while Xuánzàng’s translation of the *Abhidharmamahāvibhāṣāśāstra* was accomplished between 656 and 659 CE.¹²² Moreover, even if it seems unlikely that the similarities between the above passages reflect a kind of *direct* intertextual relation between these sources, such as borrowing or imitation, they still suggest that the flourishing of the peculiar kind of *Gōngsūn Lóngzǐ* scholarship documented in the *Essay* was stimulated by the renaissance of *abhidharma* studies in China, which was in turn spurred by Xuánzàng’s translation of various *Sarvāstivāda* texts only a few years earlier.¹²³

Returning to JBL, on balance, the collected evidence strongly suggests that whoever composed it not only recycled textual material he found in “indigenous” writings such as the Mohist ‘Canons’ or the *Zhuāngzǐ*, but that he moreover developed his argument under the strong influence of the *Chéngshìlùn*, and possibly even of texts from the *Sarvāstivāda abhidharma*. While the former had dominated Buddhist discourse throughout much of the fifth and sixth centuries CE, the latter was influential before the raise of *Chéngshìlùn* scholarship, in the late fourth and early fifth centuries, and experienced a revival in the

121 T 1545, fasc. 133, p. 689: 地云何。答顯形色此是世俗想施設地謂諸世間於顯形色。依共假想施設地名。如世間說青黃地等。長短地等。地界云何。答堅性觸。此是勝義能造地體。 (“What is earth? Answer: On the level of visible shape and color, conventional imagination applies the designation ‘earth’ to shapes and colors visible in time. Based on common presuppositions, one imagines and applies the name ‘earth’. It is like when we speak about green or yellow earth etc., about long or short [pieces of] earth etc. in time. What is the sphere of earth? Answer: It is contact with the intrinsic nature of hardness. From this one is able to derive, in an ultimate sense, the substance of earth”). Cf. also Dhammajoti 2007: 250.

122 Willemen et al. 1998: 233.

123 Willemen et al. 1998: 136.

seventh century CE. The specificities of its potential Buddhist background would thus seem to allow us to roughly date JBL to this – admittedly rather long – period. That the various similarities discussed thus far are indeed indicators of a Buddhist impact on JBL is also strongly suggested by the following discussion, which shows that other chapters of the *GSLZ* also bear manifest traces of Buddhist influence.

5 Caesuras in TBL and MSL as Evidence of a Buddhist Subtext

In the present section, we turn our attention to the other two Mohist-influenced chapters in the *GSLZ*: TBL and MSL. We will first concentrate on two passages in each of these chapters in which it is difficult to identify any straightforward link between the topics and the vocabularies of two adjacent sections. These two cases are parallel in that they both juxtapose a textual unit that is clearly composed on the model of the Mohist ‘Canons’ with another one that lacks any obvious relation to them and, at least in one case, is unanimously recognized as a larger piece of integral text, possibly dating from the early imperial or even pre-imperial period. In the case of TBL, this seemingly old material revolves around the relative directions ‘left’ and ‘right’ and the numerals ‘one’ and ‘two’, while the subsequent section discusses groupings of natural kinds – such as oxen, sheep, horses, and chickens – and their relationship to common or distinctive properties. MSL begins with deliberations on the relationship between names and their corresponding substances, which is then followed by a somewhat repetitive and redundant discussion revolving around the demonstratives ‘this’ and ‘that’.

5.1 TBL

In the case of TBL, both Graham and Shěn have argued that the first of its three parts is a fragment originating from the Warring States period.¹²⁴ This rather short section discusses relational terms, such as ‘one’ and ‘two’ or ‘left’ and ‘right’, which refer to a single entity but imply the existence of a second one. The second part deals with adequate and inadequate groupings of animal

124 Shěn 1992a: 507; Shěn 1992c (1989): 446; Graham 1956/7: 182; Graham 1965: 150–152.

kinds, and as I have mentioned above, it is clearly based on materials adopted from two subsequent lemmas of the ‘Canons’ (B 66 and B 67). Yet although TBL claims an analogy between the relation of animal kinds and different colors and the question of “left and right”,¹²⁵ it fails to specify the precise nature of this analogy. In fact, only a few commentators have tried to come up with an analysis. While one of the commentaries transmitted as part of the so-called *Old Commentary* (Jiùzhù 舊注) – wrongly attributed to the Sòng scholar Xiè Jiàng 謝絳 (Xishēn 希深, 994–1039) in the spurious preface to the *GSZ*¹²⁶ – patently fails to make sense of the so-called “animal examples”,¹²⁷ Graham has identified this passage as sheer “nonsense”,¹²⁸ while Shěn Yǒudǐng asserted that the composer of the second and third parts of TBL lacked even the slightest concept of logical reasoning¹²⁹ and went so far as to claim that he must have been mad.¹³⁰ Independently from this overall obscurity we can observe that what structurally connects the first and second sections is that they both discuss the relation between entities with different names on the basis of what they ‘have’ (yǒu 有). In the first part, the text discusses why left does not “have” right and why two does not “have” one, although there is a one included in two, and although anything properly called “left” implies there being something to its right. The second part is more difficult to summarize. Basically, it attempts to explain why the combination of the kinds ‘ox’ and ‘sheep’ leads to both horses and chickens being excluded from the resulting set of animals – although there are many properties sheep and oxen have in common with horses, which set all three apart from chickens. The text invokes properties – the term used in Chinese is simply yǒu (‘to have’) – such as ‘horns’, ‘(upper) front teeth’, and

¹²⁵ TBL, DZ/1172/2/4r[12r]/5–6 (on the similarity of the relationship between left/right and various animal kinds): 若舉而以是猶類之不同若左右猶是舉。 (“If you choose [elements] by positive designations, and if it comes to the[ir] kinds being not the same, it is like left and right, which [in this case] come to [be] like the choice by positive designations” [?]); TBL, DZ/1172/2/5r[13r]/5–6 (on the similarity of the relationship between left/right and green/white): 不害其方者反而對, 各當其所。若左右不驪。 (“As they do not intrude into each other’s domain, [green and white] turn to each other as opposites, each matching its place. [In this] they are like the case of left and right that do not intermingle”).

¹²⁶ See Graham 1956/7: 169–170; Kandel 1974: 139 n. 7.

¹²⁷ It attempts to read the first part – about “one and two” and “left and right” – on the basis of the assumption that a single thing, while engaging in the process of changing, can therefore not be split into separate things. While this line of thought succeeds in making sense of the first part of TBL, it patently collapses when it has to deal with the “animal examples”.

¹²⁸ Graham 1956/7: 162.

¹²⁹ Shěn 1992c (1989): 446.

¹³⁰ Shěn 1992a: 508.

‘(horse) tails’ – which one might invoke to distinguish or unify these kinds. These minor details in fact turn out to be crucial to the following discussion: the first example invoked immediately after the discussion of the relation between left and right is the problem of oxen and sheep having horns.

In what follows, I present a number of sources which provide what I consider the discursive contexts that explain the apparent argumentative gaps between the sections of TBL. One of the clues is found in Guṇabhadra’s (394–468)¹³¹ translation of the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra*.¹³² When discussing his entrance into the world of suffering and karmic retribution, the Buddha here explains that he is *neither* different *nor* not different from it. This somewhat elusive claim is then illustrated in the following way:

[17] *Laṅkāvatārasūtra*, fasc. 4 (Léngqié ābāduōluó bǎo jīng 楞伽阿跋多羅寶經, T 16, no. 670, p. 505):

若二者應有異。如牛角相似，故不異，長短差別故有異。[...]

If they (= Buddha and the world made up of the five aggregates [*skāndhas*; *yīn* 陰]) are two they need to have a difference. Just like one does not consider different the horns of an ox because they are similar, but considers long and short different, because they are set apart from each other.

大慧，如牛右角異左角左角異右角。如是長短種種色各各異。

Mahāmāti, it is like the right horn of an ox being different from its left horn, just like the left horn of an ox is different from its right horn. Like this, a long and short item of each and every kind of matter (*rūpa*; lit. color) will be different.

The Buddha here not only explains the relationship between different kinds of animals with respect to their having or not having horns, he also relates these expositions both to the problem of duality and non-duality and to the relation between left and right. The passage thus combines in one single illustrative example precisely the same crucial terms which occur in two subsequent sections of TBL.

While in the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra* the relationship is simply illustrated by means of an analogy, the following excerpt, transmitted in the *Chéngshìlùn*, offers a proper explanation of the connection between the notions of ‘right’ and ‘left’ and a cow’s horns:

¹³¹ Guṇabhadra (求那跋陀羅 Qúnàbātuóluó) is said to have reached China around 425 CE.

¹³² Léngqié ābāduōluó bǎojīng 楞伽阿跋多羅寶經.

[18] *Chéngshílùn*, fasc. 40 (p. 262):

一時生法，則無相因。如二角俱生，不得言左右相因。

If entities (*dharma*s) arise at (one and) the same moment, then there is no mutual causation for them. It is like two horns that arise together, when one cannot say that [the] left and [the] right [horn] cause each other.¹³³

The terms familiar to us from their loose association in the first two sections of TBL are here related to each other in a perfectly transparent way. The reason for associating the problem of “left and right” with the topic of bovine horns is patently related to the problem of causation. What is the relation between the single terms in combined phrases such as “left and right”? Obviously neither of them can be identified as the other’s cause – the arising of the left horn of an ox is not caused by its right horn, and vice versa. This example is significant, since historically it was raised by the Sautrāntikas against the idea of the simultaneity of causation, as developed in *Sarvāstivādin* scholasticism.¹³⁴ The Sautrāntikas called for a return to what the Buddha taught in the *sūtras* and dismissed the commentarial literature collected in the *abhidharmas*. Many of the specific doctrinal innovations they developed against the *Sarvāstivāda abhidharma* also found their way into *mahāyānic Yogācāra*.¹³⁵ In view of these close ties between *Sautrāntika* and *Yogācāra*, it is thus no surprise that we find the example of the two horns of an ox both in the *yogācāric Laṅkāvatārasūtra* and in the anti-*Sarvāstivādic Chéngshílùn*.

The focus on this particular notion of causality is also reflected in Buddhist “logic”, which – at least on Chinese soil – Buddhists themselves referred to as a “science of causes” (*yīnmíng* 因明; from Skrt. *hetuvidyā*). The clarification of whether the appearance in combination – be it temporal succession or spatial adjacency – of two different entities is “substantial” (i.e. the effect of a causation) or whether it is mere imagination was at the core of this “science”. This problem is of immediate relevance to the realm of language or names as well. It is crucial for so-called ‘suppositional’ or ‘conventional’ names (*jiǎmíng* 假名) that they refer to complex concepts construed on the basis of perceptual entities, such as colors and sounds, as their material basis. As these basic percepts

¹³³ Sastri only provides a summary, rendering this as follows: “Of things that arise simultaneously one does not become the cause of the other, e.g. the horns on the head of a cow”; Sastri 1978: 80.

¹³⁴ Westerhoff 2018: 68–69.

¹³⁵ On Vasubandhu’s *Abhidharmakośabhaṣya* and its relevance for the relationship between *Sautrāntika* and early *Yogācāra*, see, e.g., King 1998; Kritzer 2003.

are thus the conditioning causes of the concepts referred to by “suppositional” names, the manifestation of the complex constructions they refer to hinges on the previous manifestation of their constituents. The same constitutive role is accorded to conceptual constructions, which are themselves constitutive parts of even larger conceptual constructions: there is no cart without an axis, and there is no cow – the examples suggest – without horns. In fact, the relation of body parts to their respective bodies was a favorite example for illustrating the composite character of so-called ‘collective names’ (*zǒngmíng* 總名), such as ‘cow’ or ‘cart’. This is evident from the ubiquitous stock examples of “hare horns” (*tù jiǎo* 兔角; Skrt. *śaśaśṛṅga*) and “turtle fur” (*guī máo* 龜毛; *kacchapaloman*) for insubstantial, merely illusionary entities – there simply is no instance of the appearance of a horn that would partake in the conditioning of the subsequent manifestation of a hare.

The earliest extant work on “Buddhist logic”, the *Rúshílùn* (如實論 **Tarkaśāstra*), which only survives in Paramārtha’s Chinese translation¹³⁶ from 550 CE, already illustrates two argumentative fallacies (*sìyīn* 似因; lit. ‘apparent causes’; Skrt. *hetvābhāsa*) in the relation of animal kinds to the property of having horns:

[19] *Rúshílùn* (**Tarkaśāstra*) (T 32, no. 1533, p. 36):

一不成就者。譬如有人立馬來。何以故？見有角故。馬無角。角為因不成就。不能立馬來。

二不定者。譬如有人立秦牛來。何以故。見有角故。有角不定牛。羊鹿等亦有角。角為因不定。不能立秦牛來。

First: Unsubstantiated [cause] (*asiddha*): For example, there is a man maintaining that a horse is coming. For what cause? Because he sees that it has horns. Horses do not have horns. Horns as a cause are unsubstantiated. It does not enable [one to] maintain that a horse is coming.

Second: Indefinite [cause] (*anaikāntika*): For example, there is a man who maintains that there is an ox coming. For what cause? Because he sees horns. Having horns does not define an ox. Sheep, deer, etc. also have horns. To consider horns as the cause is indefinite. It does not enable [one] to maintain that an ox is coming.

These two fallacies are related to a fault of the ‘cause’ (*yīn* 因) in a Buddhist inference. From the logical point of view, the ‘cause’ corresponds to the minor premise in a syllogism. In the first example, someone mistakenly concludes

136 Chin. Zhēndì 真諦 (499–569).

from the fact that something “has horns” that it “is a horse”. This is clearly invalid, because the major premise (technically expressed in Buddhist logic by the ‘analogous example’, yù 喻, *udāhāraṇa*) “just like everything having horns is a horse” is obviously false, as it is unsubstantiated. The ‘cause’, the presence of horns, (minor premise, “this is a horn/these are horns”) thus does not substantiate, and hence fails to validate the conclusion that “this is a horse”. In the second example, someone considers the presence of something “having horns” a valid cause for inferring that “it is an ox”. This is invalid as well, because the analogon (i.e. the major premise) “whatever has horns is an ox” is obviously wrong. Yet it is not false either. This is not because oxen do not have horns (“whatever is an ox has horns”), but because, technically speaking, the middle term (‘ox’) is undistributed. Not everything that has horns is an ox – as the text makes explicit, something that has horns can just as well be a sheep, or a deer, or something else. The use of animal examples in discussions about what we would interpret as clarifications of the relationship between properties and kinds was thus firmly established in Buddhist contexts.

Returning to the *GSLZ*, we have noted that TBL fails to explain why it connects the problem of the directions ‘left’ and ‘right’ and the numbers ‘one’ and ‘two’ in the first part with the seemingly unrelated discussion about the role of the property ‘having horns’ in the relationship of oxen to other kinds of animals in the second. In contrast, the excerpts from fourth- through sixth-century CE translations of Buddhist texts, as discussed above, provide arguments in which all of these terms are related to each other in a detailed, comprehensible manner. This suggests that the authors of TBL may indeed have composed their piece under the influence of arguments like the ones presented above.¹³⁷ It goes without saying that this does

137 Marginal observations that seem to speak in favor of this assumption include the fact that TBL opens its arguments in both section two and section three with a chiasmic structure. Just as the Buddha in the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra* (T 16, no. 670, p. 505) somewhat redundantly repeats his statement about the difference between the right and left horn of an ox – possibly so as to underline the non-directional character of this relationship (如牛右角異左角左角異右角) – thereby leaving the chiasmus *right left* – *left right*, the authors of TBL famously start their second and third analysis or disputation (*biàn* 辯) with “羊合牛非馬牛合羊非雞” (part 2 [DZ/11721172/2/3v[11v]/2–4]) and “青以白非黃白以青非碧” (part 3 [DZ/1172/2/4v[12v]/9–10]) – that is, with the (logically unnecessary) chiasms *sheep ox* – *ox sheep* and *blue white* – *white blue*. Graham has already noted this (1956/7: 150) and has interpreted it as evidence of the influence of parallel medieval prose (*pián wén* 駢文). Perhaps the tendency to resort to this style was additionally enforced by the Buddhist model – where, *nota bene*, the repetition can be considered to make sense for the reasons stated. Moreover, the Mohist ‘Canons’, from which part two of TBL takes the animal examples of the horse and the ox, never talks about a sheep (or a chicken, for that matter). Our example [19] from the *Rúshílùn* shows that the sheep in that

not imply that they also understood – or even attempted to understand – the Buddhist reasoning. It is equally imaginable that someone accustomed to disputations inspired by the Mohist ‘Canons’ who came across such passages in Buddhist texts might have considered it an intellectual challenge to make sense of them.¹³⁸

5.2 MSL

Turning our attention to MSL, we note that, unlike TBL, this chapter does not consist of thematically discrete parts. The delimitation of the single sections and the identification of their mutual relation is therefore more difficult here. What is evident, however, is that the piece consists at least of two main portions which are largely unconnected.

The first is reminiscent of “cosmological” speculations in ancient texts such as the *Huáinánzǐ* 淮南子,¹³⁹ the *Zhuāngzǐ*,¹⁴⁰ and also the *Lùnhéng* 論衡 (Balanced Discourses),¹⁴¹ which – under the obvious influence of *Lǎozǐ*

text is the first stock example of an animal with horns, listed immediately after the ox. For an alternative explanation, see Suter, forthcoming. Additionally, the opening line of the second part of TBL seems to be the only element of the entire section which is taken neither from the ‘Canons’ nor from the ‘Tiānxià’ chapter of the *Zhuāngzǐ*.

138 For a detailed analysis of the arrangement of TBL, see Suter, forthcoming.

139 ‘Jīngshénxùn’ 精神訓 5, in Zhāng 1997: 737–738; ‘Chùzhēnxùn’ 俶真訓 1–2, in Zhāng 1997: 137–138. Cf. also the *Guānzǐ*, ‘Báixīn’ 白心 1, which defines “heaven and earth” as “the largest collection containing all things” (*bāo wù zhòng* 苞物衆); Lí/Liáng 2006: 788. Perhaps this is a pun, as 苞 also means ‘root stem’, and thus might point toward the role of “heaven and earth” as the engendering source of all things.

140 I have in mind the speculation about ‘having’ or ‘being there’ (有) and ‘not having/not being there’ (無) and the third source of both (*wèi shǐ yǒu wú* 未始有無 ~ *wú wú* 無無) in sections such as ‘Qíwù lùn’ 齊物論 8, in Guō 1978: 79; ‘Tiāndì’ 天地 8, in Guō 1978: 424; ‘Zhīběiyóu’ 知北游 8, in Guō 1978: 759–760; and as clearly reflected in the much more explicit ‘Chùzhēnxùn’ 俶真訓 chapter of the *Huáinánzǐ* (paragraphs 1–2 and 17), in Zhāng 1997: 199.

141 ‘Zìrán’ 自然 6, in Huáng 1964: 780. In a way, this links the pre-Qín and early Hàn discussions to those of the early medieval period. It opposes the idea of a ‘self-emergence’ or ‘self-emanation’ (*zì rán* 自然) of things to the conception of “heaven and earth” as their creator, while the third-century CE scholar Ruǎn Jí apparently has no problem using both terms to refer to the same thing in his discourse about the *Zhuāngzǐ* (Ruǎn 1978: 32). This is different from the slightly younger Wáng Bì 王弼 (326–349), who subordinates “heaven and earth” to ‘self-emergence’ and consequently refutes their creative function (cf. Mather 1976: xxiii). See also Liú Tishèng’s reference to the Guō Xiàng commentary on the *Zhuāngzǐ* and to apocryphal literature on the *Classic of Changes* (*Yìjīng* 易經) earlier in this volume, pp. 273–274.

40¹⁴² – ponder over “heaven-and-earth” (*tiān dì* 天地) as the producer of all other things. This kind of speculation remains current until the medieval period, and it gains renewed prominence among thinkers living at the turn of the third to the fourth century CE, such as Ruǎn Jí 阮籍 (210–263) and Guō Xiàng 郭象 (d. 312).¹⁴³ It is possibly no less relevant that, in its discussion of the problem of identifying single, individual things manifest before one’s eyes, MSL uses the term *guò* 過 (‘to go beyond’?). With this term, it seems to suggest that one should concentrate on this particular item rather than proceeding to other things. Although this passage is far from clear, it seems plausible that its author intends to make the point that when one uses a name with the intention of designating one individual entity, one has to suppress the potential for a name to refer to more than one thing – that is, to be employed as a class term referring to collections rather than to a single individual. Applying a name to a single entity requires us to suspend its classifying function, for which it is constitutive to *go beyond* what is present in one particular place. Such a use of names to refer to more than one entity is precisely what the Later Mohists in B 33 termed ‘*guò*’ (lit. ‘going beyond [itself]’, according to Graham). This interpretation seems to underlie their technical term ‘*guòmíng*’ 過名, which stands for quantifiers such as *huò* 或 (‘one of them [i.e. at least two]’). Given its very semantics, this word implies that, apart from the particular entity to which a word is referred by the speaker

142 *Lǎozǐ* 40: “The ten thousand things are born from (or: inside) having/what is there; having/what is there is born from not having/what is not there” (天下萬物生於有，有生於無。); Wáng 1978: 25. The closest parallel to MSL I was able to find is in the *Héshàng gōng* 河上公 commentary (first century CE?), which states that: “Each of the ten thousand things is born from heaven and earth. Heaven and earth have shape and position. Therefore, it says ‘they are born from (or: inside?) having/what is there’” (萬物皆從天地生，天地有形位，故言生於有也。); see Zhèng 1971: 242. “Heaven and earth”, just as in the above-mentioned passage from *Guǎnzǐ* ‘Báixīn’ 1, are identified as things, but it is striking that the commentary further characterizes heaven and earth with the attributes of having ‘shape’ (*xíng* 形) and ‘position’ (*wèi* 位), two of the key terms discussed in the *GSLZ*, the latter notably in the first part of MSL, which is under investigation here.

143 This is especially so in Guō’s commentary on the *Zhuāngzǐ*. In our case, however, the most instructive case in point is Ruǎn’s cosmological speculation in his *Discourse about Understanding Zhuāngzǐ*, which develops its ideal of an undivided unity of the world on a potentially infinite progression of the mutual inclusion (‘unification’; *tóng* 同) and exclusion (‘distinction’; *yì* 異) of classes of things defined by ‘names’ (*míng* 名) of varying degrees of generality; see Ruǎn 1978: 32.

(e.g. *mǎ huò* 馬或; roughly “one [of the] horse[s]”), there exists at least one other entity of the same kind.¹⁴⁴ It is quite possible that it is precisely this collective or “classifying” use of single names to refer to several entities which the author of MSL cautions his reader to avoid. The first part of MSL also resembles the language of a passage in the *Guānzǐ* 管子 which describes how the sage, in designating things accurately, associates the sound of the names resounding in his ears with the shapes manifesting themselves before his eyes.¹⁴⁵ The sage’s infallibility in this matter is said to allow him to correctly name whatever he encounters. Such mastery is moreover illustrated here by the purported fact that he “never raises his finger to point at the void”. This is, by the way, one of the few extant early Chinese passages – apart from the notorious ‘*Qíwù lùn*’¹⁴⁶ – which closely connects the terms ‘thing’ (*wù* 物), ‘to point at’ (*zhǐ* 指), and ‘naming’ (*mìng* 命). Given that there is some evidence to suggest that the notoriously obscure ZWL of the *GSLZ*, in spite of more or less obvious traces of later editorial interventions, was actually written at roughly the same date as the Mohist ‘Canons’,¹⁴⁷ the connections between the first part of MSL and the ancient sources mentioned above might not only be indicative of a comparatively early date of composition; they might also contain valuable hints at a possible contextualization of ZWL. Even if none of these references, taken by itself, compellingly points toward a relationship with MSL, taken together they clearly show that not only is it possible to identify plausible connections to older texts, but that these connections are manifold and fairly heterogeneous. Hence, the probability of a

144 Graham uses the term ‘complement’ (Graham 1978: 401). Cf. *Mòzǐ*, ‘*Xiǎoqǔ*’: “One horse is a horse. One (of the) horse(s) is (a) white (one), is two horses, one of which is white; it is not one horse, one of which is white” (一馬，馬也。馬或白者，二馬而或白也，非一馬而或白。); Bì 1995: 171.

145 *Guānzǐ*, ‘*Báixīn*’ 7, in Lǐ/Liáng 2006: 802. Although the details of this passage are unclear, it is intriguing that the sage’s quasi-natural authority over names and things (including the subjects of the sage) is contrasted with administrative efforts to keep records of the achievements and failures of officials.

146 The findings of a recent publication by Esther Klein (2011) show that quotations from the “Inner Chapters” throughout the Western Hàn period are scarce. She therefore concludes that the “Inner Chapters” are late, possibly even the most recent part of the collection. McCraw’s (2010) studies, which are based on the analysis of rhyming patterns, point in the opposite direction: they identify the ‘*Qíwù lùn*’ as one of the most conservative and thus possibly oldest pieces of the *Zhuāngzǐ* corpus.

147 The vocabulary of the last paragraph is rather unique in the whole of received classical Chinese literature, but there are parallels in the ‘Canons’ and ‘Explanations’. Unlike in the case of the remaining chapters of the *GSLZ*, however, we can exclude the idea that these parallels were copied from there. For details, see Suter, forthcoming.

unilateral adoption from one single source – as in the passages based on the Mohist ‘Canons’ – seems unlikely.

In stark contrast to this, the second part of MSL is not only full of terminological parallels with the Mohist ‘Canons’, but as suggested by example [5] above, it can be shown to have been literally construed on their model, at least in certain parts. Instead of attempting to further substantiate the difference between these two constitutive parts of MSL, I would simply like to summarize the central terms around which they revolve. As the title suggests, the first part of the discourse addresses the question of how, starting from an analysis of the substance (lit. ‘filling’ or ‘stuffing’, *shí* 實) of a thing located in front of us, we can proceed to its correct designation or name. The crucial terms invoked are thus ‘name’ (*míng* 名) and ‘substance’ (*shí* 實). The second part of MSL, however, consists of lengthy disquisitions about ‘this’ (*cǐ* 此) and ‘that’ (*bǐ* 彼), some of which are clearly copied from the ‘Canons’.¹⁴⁸ And while it readily lends itself to a more or less straightforward interpretation, its precise relation to the first part of the essay about ‘name’ and ‘substance’ remains unclear.

To prepare the next step in our argument, we have to return to the words of the Buddha in the excerpt from the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra* quoted above:

- [17] *Laṅkāvatārasūtra* (Léngqié ābádūluó bǎo jīng 楞伽阿跋多羅寶經, p. 505):
大慧，如牛右角異左角左角異右角。如是長短種種色各各異。

Mahāmāti, it is like the right horn of an ox being different from its left horn, just like the left horn of an ox is different from its right horn. Like this, a long and short item of each and every kind of matter (*rūpa*) will be different.

The relationship between the right and the left horn of an ox is symmetrical, and as we have already seen, neither is the cause or the effect of the other – a fact which is reflected in the argumentatively sterile repetition which turns the first part of the above passage into a chiasmus.¹⁴⁹ For our present purpose, however, the second part of this statement is more important. For the relation between left and right, the text here introduces the analogon of short and long. This leads us to the following passage from the *Dàzhì dù lùn* 大智度論 (*Mahāprajñāpāramitāsāstra*), translated by Kumārajīva in 405 CE:

¹⁴⁸ See [5a], p. 442 above.

¹⁴⁹ Cf. note 52.

[20] *Dàzhì dù lùn* 大智度論, fasc. 12 (T 25, no. 1509, p. 147):

相待者，如長短、彼此等，實無長短，亦無彼此，以相待故有名。長因短有，短亦因長；彼亦因此，此亦因彼；若在物東，則以為西，在西則以為東；一物未異而有東、西之別，此皆有名而無實也。如是等，名為相待有，是中無實法，不如色、香、味、觸等。

‘Correlative’ attributes are those like ‘long’ and ‘short’, ‘that’ and ‘this’, etc. In reality there is neither ‘long’ nor ‘short’, and there also is no ‘that’ or ‘this’. It is due to their being correlated to (lit. ‘depending on’) each other that they have their name. ‘Long’ follows from there being ‘short’, and ‘short’ equally follows from there being ‘long’. ‘That’ also follows from there being ‘this’; ‘this’ likewise follows from there being ‘that’. It is just like in the case when one is east of a thing, then one will take it for western, and when one is in the west (of it), one will take it for eastern. One single thing by itself cannot be distinguished with respect to a separation between east and west; all of these (words) are instances of there being only a name but no reality (i.e. they are nominal rather than substantial). Examples such as these are called ‘correlative’ attributes (or: beings). There is no real (substantial) entity in them. They are not like color, smell, taste, touch, etc.

Like suppositional names for mentally construed entities, such as carts or cows, terms for correlative attributes are considered “unsubstantial”. They are different from qualities, which are passively perceived and thus allegedly given without the mind’s active interference.¹⁵⁰ At this point, it is more important to direct our attention to a small detail in this passage: the second example of a pair of correlative terms is the demonstrative pronouns ‘this’ (*cǐ* 此) and ‘that’ (*bǐ* 彼), which are so prominent in the second, Mohist-based, section of MSL. As distinct from sensual qualities, which involve real or substantial entities (*shífǎ* 實法), correlative names are only defined through their mutual relation: this entity is “this” only due to its opposition to something else which is “that”, and vice versa. To summarize, we thus note that ‘this’ and ‘that’ belong to the stock examples of names of correlative – and thus unsubstantial – attributes.

¹⁵⁰ This shows that the three sections of TBL deal with terms which, according to the taxonomy of the *Dàzhì dù lùn*, belong to three different categories of names: names of correlative attributes (directions, numbers); conventional or suppositional names (animal names, body parts such as horns and teeth); and names of colors – that is, actual or substantial entities directly presented to our senses. The very fact that TBL arguably attempts to establish a communality rather than a difference between these three classes of words suggests that its author may not have been aware of this distinction.

At this point, we need to return to MSL. As we have noted above, the concluding section of this chapter contains an extended and somewhat verbose discussion of the relationship between ‘this’ and ‘that’. And while it is more difficult to condense the first part of MSL into a couple of central terms, it is clear that, as is already announced in the title itself, the text deals with the relationship between ‘names’ (*míng* 名) and ‘substances’ (*shí* 實).

Let us now have a look at an excerpt from the *Zhàolùn* 肇論, a collection of essays composed by the scholar-monk Sēng Zhào 僧肇 (384–414 CE):

- [21] Sēng Zhào 僧肇 (384–414 CE), ‘Bù zhēn kōng lùn’ 不真空論 (Discourse on Not Taking Emptiness as Authentic) (*Zhàolùn* 肇論, T 45, no. 1858, p. 152):
夫以名求物，物無當名之實。以物求名，名無得物之功。物無當名之實，非物也；名無得物之功，非名也。是以名不當實，實不當名。名實無當，萬物安在？
故：《中觀》云：「物無彼此。」而人以此爲此，以彼爲彼。彼亦以此爲彼，以彼爲此。此、彼莫定乎一名，而惑者懷必然之志。

Now, if you rely on names to look for things, no thing will match as the substance of a name. If you rely on things to look for names, no name will meet with the function of a thing. If no thing matches as the substance of a name, this negates things. If no name meets with the function of a thing, this negates names. Hence, names do not match substances, and substances do not match names. But if there is no match between substances and names, where, after all, are the ten thousand things?

Therefore: The *Treatise on the Middle Path* says: “No [single] thing is *this* or *that*”, but people consider this to be *this*, and they consider that as *that*. It is also through *this* that that is considered *that*, and [this] is considered as *this* through *that*. None of them, neither *this* nor *that*, is defined by one single name. But the deluded harbor the conviction that it must be like this.¹⁵¹

The above passage consists of two subsequent paragraphs. We shall refrain from providing a further analysis here. Suffice it to say that Sēng Zhào’s position seems directed against the idea manifest in the categorization of names in the *Dàzhì dù lùn*, as discussed above. The latter suggested that certain names – namely, those for sensual qualities – imply some substantial factors which are materially caused and not mere products of the imagination. On the contrary,

151 For translations, see also Liebenenthal 1948: 65–66; Robinson 1967: 226–227.

Sēng Zhào contends that all names fail to grasp anything substantial, so that neither the reference of a name to a purported real effect of causation nor the correspondence of an allegedly real entity to its name are possible. In view of the alleged impossibility of correlating names and real substances, the paragraph ends with a rhetorical question, which calls into doubt the very existence of the ten thousand things.

The conclusion, in which Sēng Zhào actually comes up with the purported solution to the problem, emphatically opens with a ‘therefore’, which is followed by a quotation from the newly translated *Mūlamadhyamakakārikāśāstra* (*Zhōnglùn* 中論). Its somewhat enigmatic claim that in no thing is there a ‘this’ or a ‘that’ is then elaborated upon in a way with which we are familiar from the definition of “correlative” attributes in the *Dàzhì dù lùn*, as quoted above.¹⁵² First, it is human beings who are responsible for making things into ‘these’ and ‘those’, and second, the meaning of both terms, rather than pointing toward anything essential outside of themselves, is simply defined through their mutual relation. Consequently, neither of them can be determined or defined by a single name. This rhetorical move is all too obvious: as a true follower of the middle path of non-duality, Sēng Zhào universalizes what has been acknowledged as the specificity of one particular kind of names. Assimilating all names to correlative names like the demonstratives under discussion, he raises “correlativity” and as its corollary, insubstantiality, to the level of a general characteristic of all names. For our present purpose, however, we can omit the details and problems of Sēng Zhào’s approach. What is important to note here is that, from his perspective, it makes perfect sense to proceed directly from the problem of the relation between names and reality to the discussion of the correlative terms ‘this’ and ‘that’.

Note that this sequence of topics is mirrored in the division of MSL, which is also organized into two subsequent parts: the first one dealing with ‘names’ and ‘reality’, the second with the demonstratives ‘this’ and ‘that’. However, the connection here is not even remotely comparable to the rigor of Sēng Zhào’s treatise. Rather, the piece gives the impression that its author took the link between the problem of correlating names and realities and the discussion of the demonstratives for granted, and thus felt no need to spend any effort commenting on it. We may thus assume that he was aware of the discussions that contextualized the problem of the relation between language and reality within a discourse invoking the demonstratives ‘this’ and ‘that’.

¹⁵² See [20], p. 483 above.

We might even wonder whether the author – or rather the editor – who complemented the apparently earlier first part of MSL with the discussion of ‘this’ and ‘that’, which he partly copied from the ‘Canons’, was unaware of the precedent of Sēng Zhào’s short treatise. We shall come back to this point in section seven below. To conclude the present subsection, I will now add one last observation which, in spite of its preliminary nature, seems to provide another indication that speaks in favor of the assumption of a strong Buddhist context informing the composition of MSL.

For this purpose, we must take one step back in order to have another look at the peculiar way in which MSL modifies its Mohist model:

[5a] *Mòzǐ*, ‘*Mòjīngshuō*’ B 33:¹⁵³

知是之非此也，有知是之不在此也。 (DZ/1176/10/12v=511/8.5–9.1)

[5b] *GSLZ*, ‘*Míngshí lùn*’ (DZ/1172/3/6r[20r]/4–6):

知此之非{此}也，知此之不在此也，明[=則]不謂也。

知彼之非彼也，知彼之不在彼，則不謂也。

We have already noted that the passage in MSL differs from its Mohist precedent in its replacement of the anaphoric *shì* with the near and distant demonstratives *cǐ* and *bǐ*. We have also seen that the verbal use of the former, as exemplified in the Mohist example, was already common in the pre-imperial period, both in the common sense of ‘to consider correct/right’ and in the technical sense of ‘to identify sth. as (of) the same (class)’. In stark contrast, the verbal use of the demonstratives *cǐ* and *bǐ*, as exemplified in MSL, seems unattested in pre-Qín and Hàn texts – with the exception of a handful of highly opaque cases in the ‘Canons’. Again, we find a very specific use of these terms in a context we have already come across above, toward the end of our discussion of JBL: a *Sarvāstivādic* text, the *Abhidharmayāyānusāraśāstra* (*Āpídámó shùn zhènglǐ lùn* 阿毘達磨順正理論, T 1562),¹⁵⁴ translated by Xuánzàng between 653 and 654 CE,¹⁵⁵ explains why the correlativity of names does *not* justify the claim that they lack a substantial foundation. After arguing that there are distinctive marks such as ‘hardness’ which are directly sensed in touch and immediately testify to the reality of substantial elements such as ‘earth’, the discussion

¹⁵³ Cf. Amano 1968: 225–226.

¹⁵⁴ The text is marked by “sharp sectarian polemics” (Willemen et al. 1998: 247) and intends “to safeguard Kāśmīra Vaibhāṣika orthodoxy by demonstrating the erroneous interpretations in Vasubandhu’s auto-commentary” (i.e. the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*) (p. 244).

¹⁵⁵ Willemen et al. 1998: 245.

addresses the problem of correlative designations such as ‘heavy’ and ‘light’, which are clearly “correlative”. With regard to these, the text states:

- [22] *Abhidharmanyāyānusāraśāstra* (*Āpīdāmó shùn zhènglǐ lùn* 阿毘達磨順正理論, T 29, no. 1562, p. 353):

又言輕重相待成故。非實有者。此非善說。

Moreover, if one says that light and heavy are not really there (do not really exist), because they are constituted in mutual dependence, this is not a good theory.

譬如因果。輕重亦然。非即待此復名為 果。 謂如一物待此名因。待彼名果。非即待彼復名為因。

If we take the example of cause and effect, then light and heavy are like these. I say that basing oneself on this to name a thing the cause is not the same as basing oneself on this to name it the effect. Basing ourselves on that to name it the effect is not the same as basing ourselves on that again to name it the cause.

如是一物待此名輕。非即待此復名為重。待彼名重。非即待彼復名為輕。因果既實。此如何假。

In this way, naming one thing light on the basis of this is not the same as to again name it heavy on the basis of this. Naming it hard on the basis of that is not the same as again naming it light on the basis of that. As cause and effect are real, how could these (= light and heavy) be (merely) superimposed?

故唯能詮相待不定。非所詮體而有改易。

Therefore, it is only the notion (the interpretation; lit. “what enables one to interpret”) which is mutually dependent and not fixed; it is not the case that the substance (object) interpreted would indeed have moved or been exchanged.

又如彼此岸。輕重性亦爾。謂於彼物立彼岸名。非說此岸令體改易。或於此物立此岸名。非說彼岸令體改易。

Again, it is like this or that side [of a river]. And with the nature of light and heavy, it is also like this. If for that thing I establish a name of that side, this is not to say that this side makes (its) substance move or change. Alternatively, if I establish for this thing a name of this side, this is not to say that that side makes (its) substance move or change.

The text here argues that the replacement of correlative names only implies a change in perspective,¹⁵⁶ but the perspective does not change anything about the reality that is conceived or expressed in words. The demonstrative pronouns *cī* and *bī* thus clearly refer to the opposite terms, which may well be relative, but which only mark the opposite ends of a scale. Depending on my vantage point, I may name something ‘heavy’ or ‘light’, but this has absolutely no consequence for the reality of the thing I refer to; as another example ingeniously shows: “Reducing a fire means cooling down so that there is only a reduced concentration of warmth. Based on this (the former, i.e. ‘cool’) one calls it by the name of ‘cool’; based on that (the latter, i.e. ‘warm’), one calls it by the name of ‘warm’. Yet, although the name is not fixed, the substance is real.”¹⁵⁷ This is a crystal-clear analysis of the correlative terms ‘this’ and ‘that’, which refutes the assumption that their mutual dependence implies the lack of a real basis of designation.

Due to the lack of illustrative examples, it is unclear how exactly the compilers of MSL understood the relation between ‘names’, ‘reality’, and correlative terms, as summarized by the demonstratives *bī* and *cī*. Nevertheless, it seems highly plausible that discussions of the kind presented above provide the background for its compilation. Moreover, while Xuánzàng’s translation is late, the earliest *Sarvāstivādin* commentaries on the *abhidharma* were translated into Chinese as early as in the late fourth century CE. As we have seen above, this took place only shortly after the medieval renaissance of Mohist disputation set in.

To summarize these observations, in both TBL and MSL we note a clear caesura separating the parts with obvious parallels to the ‘Canons’ from the parts that lack such parallels. While neither TBL nor MSL makes any palpable effort to explicate the precise relationship between the topics discussed in these neighboring sections, a look at several relevant Buddhist texts reveals precisely the rationale that seems to bridge these gaps.

¹⁵⁶ My interpretation of the passage must remain preliminary. As Willemsen et al. observe, the arguments of the text “often present interpretative difficulties for the modern reader, in as much as they presume intimate familiarity with the entire system of Sarvāstivāda-Vaibhāṣika thought and often hinge upon subtle distinctions or obscure details of doctrine” (Willemsen et al. 1998: 248).

¹⁵⁷ “又如：汝說。微火爲冷。有微煖聚。待此名冷。待彼名煖名雖不定而體是實。” (T 1562, fasc. 29, p. 354).

5.3 Further Buddhist Traces in TBL

To complete our picture of possible Buddhist reverberations in the Mohist-inspired chapters of the *GSLZ*, another look at TBL seems instructive. There are hints that this chapter not only adopts various topics from an explicitly Buddhist context, but that even its very name might be related to these particular references. We have already suggested that the thematic continuity between the first and the second parts – between the discussion of left and right and the subsequent disquisitions on animal properties, first and foremost the horns of oxen – possibly reflects an argument of the *Sautrāntikas* against the *Sarvāstivādins*: the example of the simultaneous appearance of the left and the right horns of an ox was intended as proof of the impossibility of the *Sarvāstivāda* theory of simultaneous causation.¹⁵⁸ However, TBL is possibly even more deeply infused with Buddhist elements than one sees on the surface. To demonstrate this, a textual variant of TBL is revealing: a short passage from the beginning of the first part of TBL, dedicated to the discussion of the numbers one and two and the positions left and right, as transmitted in the comparatively early *Shuōfú* 說郛 edition of the *GSLZ*, stands out in one significant aspect:

[23] *GSLZ*, ‘Tōngbiàn lùn’:

Dào zàng (DZ/1172/3r[11r]/1–4)

Shuōfú (Táo 1986 [1927]: vol. 8, fasc. 47, p. 5r, l. 8–9)¹⁵⁹

A 曰：右可謂二乎？

Can right be called two?

A 曰：右為二位乎？

Can right be considered two positions/the position (of) two?

B 曰：不可。

It cannot.

B 曰：不可。

It cannot.

A 曰：左可謂二乎？

Can left be called two?

A 曰：左可為二位乎？

Can left be considered two positions/the position (of) two?

B 曰：不可。

It cannot.

B 曰：不可。

It cannot.

¹⁵⁸ Cf. Westerhoff 2015: 68–69.

¹⁵⁹ For an investigation of the *Shuōfú* edition, see Indraccolo 2013.

A 曰：左與右可謂二？
Can left and right
be called two?

B 曰：可。
They can.

A 曰：左與右可謂二？
Can left and right be called two?

B 曰：可。
They can.

This synopsis shows that the two versions differ in two respects. Besides replacing the first two instances of the verb *wèi* 謂 ('to call') with *wéi* 為 ('to consider'), the *Shuōfū* (SF) version – like MSL – speaks about 'positions' (*wèi* 位).¹⁶⁰ Graham long ago proposed that the short dialogue at the beginning of TBL, from which the excerpt above is taken, refers to the counting rods that were used in China before the introduction of the abacus.¹⁶¹ In our present context, it is highly relevant that the example of the counters in an abacus was one of the four major accounts the *Sarvāstivādin*s developed to argue that all dharmas exist – in spite of their different temporal characteristics of being past, present, and future.¹⁶² The counters in an abacus do not represent different numbers as intrinsic differences. Their difference is one of relative position or state, rather than a difference in substance – in the abacus, the counter for thousands is not bigger than the counter for hundreds. This argument for the insubstantiality of temporal properties is attributed to Vasumitra (Chin. Shìyǒu 世友, second century CE) and referred to as a "difference of state" (位有異 *avastahā-anyathātva*).¹⁶³ And while

¹⁶⁰ This technical term also occurs in *Zhōuyì* scholarship. However, unlike in the *GSLZ*, where it refers to the relative position of a thing in space, here it only refers to the line positions in a hexagram.

¹⁶¹ Graham 1965: 151–152.

¹⁶² For a detailed discussion of this problem and its historical development, as well as extensive translations, see Dessein 2007.

¹⁶³ Willemen et al. 1998: 22; Westerhoff 2018: 64–65. Cf., e.g., *Abhidharmamahāvibhāṣaśāstra* (T 1545, fasc. 77, p. 396): 說位異者。彼謂諸法於世轉時。由位有異非體有異。如運一籌置一位名一。置十位名十。置百位名百。雖歷位有異而籌體無異。如是諸法經三世位。雖得三名而體無別。此師所立世無雜亂。 ("Those who argue for the difference of position say that the alternation of the temporal characteristics of dharmas derives from a difference of position and not from a difference of substance. It is just like moving a counting rod. When you place it in the position of one, you name it 'one'; when you place it in position ten, you name it 'ten'; when you place it in position hundred you name it 'hundred'. Although there is a difference in the position it passes through, the substance of the counting rod has no difference. In this way, all dharmas pass through the three times. Even though they receive three different names (past, present, future), their substance is not distinct." For an alternative translation, see Dessein 2007: 332–333. Dessein shows that while this argument is already present in the oldest version of the *Vibhāṣa* compendium (*Vibhāṣaśāstra* T 1547 [Pīpōshālùn 鞞婆沙論],

Chinese translators before Xuánzàng coined terms for this “difference of state” that lacked the word *wèi*,¹⁶⁴ this crucial term itself already occurs in the short outline of the argument in the earliest *Vibhāṣa* compendium translated into Chinese in the late fourth century CE. Interestingly enough, here it has the specific meaning of a single horizontal row on an abacus which, depending on its relative position, counts the ones, tens, hundreds, and thousands (etc.), respectively.¹⁶⁵ This image is particularly interesting, as the multilayered structure of the rows of an abacus closely resembles the arrangement of the six lines in a hexagram – and it is precisely to single line positions in a hexagram the technical term *wèi* was referred in contemporary Chinese scholarship about the *Changes*, that is, the most authoritative indigeneous source for the conceptualization of change.

In view of the way the editors of JBL and TBL seem to have written their pieces – namely, by integrating into their own compositions passages from ancient texts or fragments that contain crucial terms disputed in their own time, such as ‘hard’, ‘stone’, ‘left’, ‘right’, or ‘ox horn’ – it appears plausible that the variant transmitted in the SF version might in fact be earlier. If we assume that Graham and Shěn are right in identifying this first part of the extant TBL as pre- or early imperial, it seems plausible that its compilers came across this fragment and were struck by the occurrence, in an ancient text, of the crucial term *wèi* (‘position’), which was so prominent in contemporary discussions about the nature of change and time, and thus integrated it into their own essay on this topic. As we have already seen, the example of the left and right horns of an ox also arose from the controversies over the *Sarvāstivādin* concept of time, though more specifically referring to their theory of simultaneous causation. The fact that it appears immediately after the discussion of ‘position’ in TBL is thus hardly coincidental, even more so

extant in a Chinese translation from 383 CE), the attribution to Vasumitra only occurs later (Dessein 2007: 335).

164 *Vibhāṣaśāstra* (T 1547) has *shíyì* 時異 (“difference in moment of time”, p. 962); *Samyuktābhīdharmahṛdaya* (*Zá āpītán xīn lùn* 雜阿毘曇心論, T 1552) has *fēn fēn yì* 分分異 (“difference according to the subdivisions [of time]”, p. 295).

165 *Vibhāṣaśāstra* T 1547, p. 962: “Those [holding] that the point in time is different explain that the factors (dharmas) receive their names according to the moment in time. And as [the difference] is one in the moment of time, it is not substance (lit. ‘the seed’) [that is different]. It is like a counting rod. When you move it to the lower position for the first time, the ones turn into tens, [then you] reach the hundreds and the thousands. This single rod gets its name according to the changing moment in time” (時異者說彼法隨時得名。時故非種故。如算子初下位，一轉十，至百千。彼一算子隨轉時得名。).

as this might also prove helpful in explaining why this chapter came to be called “*tōng biàn lùn*”.

Taken in isolation, the word *tōng* in this title is ambiguous. Read as a verb, it can mean ‘to understand’; referring to a state, it means ‘constancy’, and it thus represents the lexical opposite of ‘change’, the second term in the title. While it is impossible to decide which interpretation is preferable on the basis of TBL itself, the present discussion strongly suggests that the first is more likely. Both examples – the relative position of the counting rods as a symbol of the merely relative difference of temporal properties and the example of the simultaneous appearance of the horns of an ox – pertain to the overall problem of *understanding* the principles underlying change. Given the prominence of the phrase “*tōng biàn*” in the *Xìcí* 繫辭 commentary on the *Zhōuyì* 周易¹⁶⁶ in the context of fourth-century CE “dark learning” (*xuánxué* 玄學),¹⁶⁷ when the first *abhidharma* texts were translated into Chinese,¹⁶⁸ it would not seem far-fetched for a Chinese scholar conversant in *Zhōuyì* exegesis and aware of the *Sarvāstivādin* discussions about the nature of temporal properties to choose the expression “*tōng biàn*” as the title of his text – even if this forces a reading of the term *tōng* in the sense of ‘understanding’, which is possibly more specific than the common interpretation of this term in discussions about the *Changes* as ‘penetrating’, an interpretation which maintains the connotations of both knowledge and persistence or constancy.

While an unstated relation to Buddhist debates about change and time seems highly probable in the case of the first part of TBL, the passage about the ox horns which introduces the second part, with its discussion of animal kinds, may also conceivably be informed by another Buddhist attempt to come to terms with the problem of change. The oldest *Sarvāstivādin* attempt to reconcile the doctrine of the existence of all dharmas with their varying temporal properties, as transmitted in the *abhidharma*, is attributed to a certain Dharmatrāta (Fǎjiù 法救). He characterized the distinction between the temporal properties of a *dharma* as a difference in modes of being (*bhāva-*

166 Cf. *Zhōuyì zhù shū* 周易注疏 (fasc. 11, p. 248): 通變之謂事。 (“What persists through change is called (one’s) affairs/duties [or: events]”).

167 Bart Dessein has in fact suggested that “it might have been Buddhism that stimulated creativity in Chinese philosophy, thus forming *xuanxue* thinking”, a supposition which, according to him, is “corroborated both in terms of chronology and content” (Dessein 2016: 291).

168 Hǎn Kāngbó 韓康伯 (fl. second half of the fourth century CE) comments the *Xìcí* passage quoted above as follows: “When a thing is exhausted it changes; what persists after changing is life/reproduction, from which affairs/duties/events arise” (物窮則變，變而通之，事之所由生也。); *Zhōuyì zhù shū*, fasc. 11, p. 248. In his commentary, Hǎn uses the phrase “*tōng biàn*” half-a-dozen times.

anyathātvā, *yǒu lèi yì* 有類異) such as shape (*ākṛti*, *xíng* 形) or quality (*guṇa*, *shì* 勢), rather than substances.¹⁶⁹ That the Chinese translators around Xuánzàng decided to capture the technical Buddhist term ‘mode of being’ (*bhava*) with the Chinese expression *lèi* 類 (i.e. ‘kind’ or ‘class’) would at least have provided a putative compiler of TBL with a good reason to include not only the topic of numbers and directions, but also that of animal kinds in his discussion of change. And while earlier translations in the fourth through the fifth centuries CE adopted different Chinese terms (*shì yì* 事異, *fēn yì* 分異) for *bhāva-anyathātvā*,¹⁷⁰ it appears of some relevance to our case that the *Samyuktābhīdharmahṛdayaśāstra*, a comparatively early *Vibhāṣa* text translated into Chinese in 434, attributes this theory of differences in “modes of being” to the “*Sarvāstivādin* of *change*” (*zhuǎnbiàn sàpódūo* 轉變薩婆多) in general, rather than to a particular master.¹⁷¹

The intricacies of the *Sarvāstivāda* in and *Sautrāntika* doctrines sketched above are as complex as TBL remains elusive in many respects. This, along with the limits of space, forces me to restrict myself to an account of a number of more or less salient similarities between TBL and these theories. However, TBL contains one possible reference to a text from the *Sarvāstivāda abhidharma* that is more explicit than those discussed so far. This nicely complements our examination, as it comes in the discussion of genuine and mixed colors in the third and last part of TBL. The *Āryavasumitrabodhisattva-saṅgītīśāstra* (*Zūn Póxūmì púsà suǒjī lùn* 尊婆須密菩薩所集論, T 28, no. 1549),

169 Willemsen et al. 1998: 21; Westerhoff 2018: 64. Cf. *Abhidharmamahāvibhāṣaśāstra* (T 1545, fasc. 77, p. 396): 說類異者。彼謂諸法於世轉時。由類有異非體有異。如破金器等作餘物時形雖有異而顯色無異。又如乳等變成酪等時捨味勢等不捨顯色。如是諸法從未來世至現在世時。雖捨未來類得現在類。而彼法體無得無捨。 (“Those who explain the differences as modes hold that the change of the dharmas in time derives from the fact that their modes have differences, not from the fact that their substance would have differences. It is like destroying a golden jar etc. When you make it into other things, the shape may well be different, but the matter has no difference. Again, at the time when milk etc. changes to become curd etc., it may well lose dispositions such as taste, but it does not lose its matter. It is like this when the dharmas move from the future to the present. Although they lose the future mode to receive the present mode, the substance of their dharmas has nothing it would lose or receive”). Cf. Dessein 2007: 332.

170 See *Vibhāṣaśāstra* (*Pípóshālùn* 鞞婆沙論, T 1547, p. 466) and *Samyuktābhīdharmahṛdaya* (*Zā āpītán xīn lùn* 雜阿毘曇心論, T 1552, pp. 961–962), respectively. The former uses *zhōng* 種 for *dravya* (‘substance’), the latter *shì* 事 (T 1552, p. 962).

171 Dessein 2007: 336. Unlike Xuánzàng’s *lèi*, these early translations obviously have no correspondences in TBL and do not invite speculations about possible *Sarvāstivādin* influences on the text.

translated during the Former Qín dynasty in 381 CE (Fú Qín 符秦, 351–394),¹⁷² discusses the interactions of the four elements, their characteristics, and the derived visible matter they produce. It offers the example of heating an iron ball. This process is said to make the iron – which is hard by nature – both soft and light. The analysis explains this as an interaction of the four elements. Fire is said to focus the power (*jīn lì* 筋力) accumulated in the firewood. The emerging qualities of lightness, softness, and purity are attributed to the functions of wind, water, and fire respectively, while the loss of hardness is explained according to the intrinsic nature of the element of earth. Hardness, the elementary quality of earth, is said to diminish when exposed to heat. The empirical observation that, for this reason, iron sometimes exhibits the property of heaviness and sometimes that of lightness reflects the varying strength of the four elements, which are considered its material constituents. In a subsequent step, the text proceeds to discuss how the mutual relation of the elements is reflected in the *color*¹⁷³ of iron. The passage runs as follows:

[24] *Āryavasumitrabodhisattvasaṅgītiśāstra*, fasc. 4 (T 28, no. 1549, p. 758):

生彼鮮明者。由地種生。當言與火相應。應如四大所造青色四大所造黃色耶。或作是說。青色微妙。或作黃色。非青色[。]如青黃石。復次餘四大所造青色。餘四大所造黃色。或依微妙或依黃。非以一色微妙相依。如是青赤。如是青白。如是黃赤。如是黃白。如是赤白是謂六。

What generates its (= the iron's) brilliance arises from the element of earth. When you say that it interacts with fire, is this interaction like the green color (visible matter) produced by the four elements or like the yellow color produced by the four elements? Some adopt this explanation: green color minimizes. Some say the yellow color negates the green color. But when it comes to a green-yellow stone, this again is the green color produced by the remaining [ones of the] four elements and the yellow color produced by the remaining [ones of the] four elements. Some of it is based on the minimization (of green); some of it is based on yellow

¹⁷² The translation is attributed to *Saṅghabhadra (Zhòngxuán 眾賢), Dharmanandin (Tánmónántí 曇摩難提 ~ Fǎxǐ 法喜, fl. 381–391), Gautama Saṅghadeva (Jùtán Sēngjiātípó 瞿曇僧伽提婆), and Zhú Fóniàn 竺佛念. Its history and sectarian affiliation is unclear; see Willemen et al. 1998: 159. It is considered contemporaneous with the latest stratum of early *Sarvāstivāda abhidharma* texts (pp. 163–164).

¹⁷³ On the *Sarvāstivāda* assumption about atoms of color and shape, see Dhammajoti 2007: 261.

(negating it). It is not the case that it is due to the minimization of a single color (alone); (the colors) are based on each other (one minimizing, the other negating it). So it is with green and red, green and white, yellow and red, yellow and white, and red and white. This is what I call the six (colors).

Even if the details of the above passage are difficult to assess in isolation with any degree of certainty, the main issues raised are nonetheless clear: assuming that all visible matter is derived from the four elements, the passage attempts to explain how the colors we actually see are derived from the four cardinal colors of yellow, green, red, and white, which are attributed to the elements of earth, water, fire, and wind, respectively. The explanation hinges on the notion of brilliance: the color which is dominant at a particular point in time affects the visual sense and effectuates the appearance of a color in the eye consciousness. The actual colors are thus considered an effect of the varying strength of the elements¹⁷⁴ at some particular point, as well as of the mutual interaction of neighboring colors. The change in color is interpreted in terms of the decreasing strength of one element and the concomitant strengthening of another element, the color of which negates (*fēi*) the waning color of its weakening predecessor.

Even this coarse sketch is sufficient to demonstrate that the passage contains almost the same basic traits as the third part of TBL. There, the cardinal colors of Chinese tradition are understood as reflecting the dominance of the five conflicting phases or elements of wood, earth, metal, fire, and water, as well as their mutual subjugation. As in the Buddhist example above, it addresses the problem of mixed or intermediate colors, which are explained as an unsettled conflict between the elements. In its basic outlines, the color section in TBL resembles this kind of *Sarvāstivādin* elementary physics and optics so closely that one wonders if it may not simply be a variation of it, transferred and adapted to a specifically Chinese context.¹⁷⁵ While this overall similarity might not be strong enough evidence to really substantiate this suspicion, one last observation provides, if not a proof, at least a piece of further evidence that TBL indeed draws on this Buddhist source.

¹⁷⁴ The elements are said to be equally distributed in matter – that is, every atom contains one of each of the four elements. Change therefore cannot be interpreted in terms of a varying ratio between them.

¹⁷⁵ On the practice, in *abhidharma* circles and beyond, of matching Buddhist “numerical categories” (*shìshù* 事數) with non-Buddhist terms, see Dessein 2016: 287–288; on the “four elements” and the “five phases”, see p. 287.

In this last step, we first have to return to our previous discussion of the textual overlap between the extant *GSLZ* and the Mohist ‘Canons’. In a detailed comparison of the relevant parallel passages, we can observe a peculiarity in the method of compilation used by the editors of the *GSLZ*: when they composed a text on a particular topic, they sometimes used all the material available *except* the crucial phrase that had most probably brought the passage to their attention in the first place. As an illustration, let us return to the following example from our previous discussion. When they wrote their piece on “hard and white”, the editors included almost all the phrases from the Mohist precedent, except the key expression “*jiān bái*”:

[3b] *Mòzǐ*, ‘*Mòjīng*’, ‘*Mòjīngshuō*’ B 4:

不可偏去而二。說在見與俱，一與二，(DZ/1176/10/2v=501/10.1–10.17)
廣與循。

|見|不|見離，一二不相盈，廣循 堅白。(DZ/1176/10/10r=508/5.1–5.13)

[3a] *GSLZ*, ‘*Jiānbái lùn*’ (DZ/1172/3/2r[16r]/7–8; 2v[16v]/1–3):

曰：得其白，得其堅，見與不見離。與不見離，一一不相盈，故離。離也者，藏也。

曰：石之白，石之堅，見與不見，二與，三若廣修而相盈也。其非舉乎？

For a translation and discussion of these lines, see above.¹⁷⁶ For now, let us return to TBL.

The following is the beginning of the third part of TBL, with its discussion of genuine and mixed colors and their mutual relation:

[25] *GSLZ*, TBL (DZ/1176/2/4v[12v]/9–10; 5r[13r]/1–6):

曰：青以白非黃。白以青非碧。

曰：何哉？

曰：青白不相與而相與反對也，不相鄰而相鄰不害其方也。

不害其方者反而對各當其所，若左右不驪。

The beginning of this third part of TBL repeats the chiasmic structure which introduces the second part that deals with kinds of animals – a structure that possibly

¹⁷⁶ See above, p. 440.

imitates a passage from Guṇabhadra's translation of the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra* (T 16, no. 670).¹⁷⁷ The formulation of TBL's initial claim (青以白非黃) strongly resembles the above passage from the *Āryavasumitrabodhisattvasaṅgītīśāstra* (T1549, p. 758), where it says that some people claim that "yellow color negates green color" (黃色非青色). We have noted above that part of the ensuing explanation for the relationship between green and white in TBL is adopted from the Mohist 'Explanations' (B 65).¹⁷⁸ Let us now look at how the investigation into the nature of the colors and their relationship to the underlying four elements is introduced in the *Sarvāstivāda* treatise named after Vasumitra, which I quoted in [24] above:

[26] *Āryavasumitrabodhisattvasaṅgītīśāstra* (p. 757):

頗有一色不前不後四方盡現耶。或作是說。無也。一色微妙彼不可見。方不成就。是故無也。

Is it really true that there is one single color (visible matter?) which neither advances nor retreats and is completely visible on all four sides (lit. squares) (of the world)? Some adopt this theory: This does not exist. One single color is minute. It cannot be seen. Therefore a [visible] side (lit. square) is not accomplished. This is why it does not exist.

My translation remains preliminary at this point. What the passage may refer to is the idea that single atoms are minute, and hence the visible matter they produce remains too weak to give rise to visual perception. It is only in collections of the same type (*héjí* 合集) that such minimal bits of matter gain visibility.¹⁷⁹ For this reason, a single piece of colored matter in isolation must remain invisible.¹⁸⁰

These specificities are obviously irrelevant for our present purposes. What is striking is the observation that the very passage of the *Āryavasumitrabodhisattvasaṅgītīśāstra* which demonstrates extremely close similarities with the third part of TBL, in terms of both themes and formulations, is introduced with a sentence which collocates the two terms *fāng* ('square') and *jìn* ('exhaust', 'complete'). To see the relevance of this point, we need to have another look at the

¹⁷⁷ See n. 137, p. 478 above.

¹⁷⁸ See above, p. 440.

¹⁷⁹ Cf. *Āryavasumitrabodhisattvasaṅgītīśāstra* (T 28, no. 1549, p. 755). On the term *héjí* 合集, see Dhammajoti 2007: 262.

¹⁸⁰ It is possible that this is an implicit reference to Śrīlāta who is said to have claimed that even a single atom is visible (cf. Dhammajoti 2007: 314).

passage of the *Mòzǐ* from which the authors of TBL adopted a four-character phrase to discuss their crucial notion of *fāng*:

[4b] *Mòzǐ*, ‘Mòjīng’, ‘Mòjīngshuō’ B 65.¹⁸¹

一法者之相與也_盡，若方之相召也。說在方。 (DZ/1176/10/
4r=502/5.11–6.10)

一：方貌_盡。俱有法而異，或木或石，不害其方之 (DZ/1176/10/
相合 [= 合] 也_盡。貌猶方也。物俱然。 15v=514/4.12–6.6)

In the present context it does not seem necessary to repeat the translation. What this passage has in common with the Buddhist text just discussed is the prominence of the term *jìn* 盡, which here stands for the ‘completeness’ or ‘perfectness’ of the unity established by the formal criterion of ‘squareness’ (*fāng*). The term *fāng* here is thus only an *example* of a formal criterion, not a technical term. In contrast, we have seen that the compilers of TBL interpret it in the sense of the ‘region’ or ‘domain’ filled in with a certain color. It is obvious that this interpretation closely resembles what appears to be the use of the term in the above example [26] from the *Sarvāstivādin* treatise attributed to Vasumitra. Note that, in the short excerpt from the MS in [4b], *fāng* occurs no less than three times, while *jìn* – the term for the concept it illustrates – appears twice. Note further that in the brief passage from the *Āryavasumitrabodhisattva-saṅgītiśāstra*, the term *fāng* not only occurs twice, but in one case it immediately precedes the pivotal term *jìn*. The Buddhist treatise thus uses the same word as the passage from the *Mòzǐ* – though with the common adjectival meaning of ‘complete’ or ‘exhaustive’, rather than in any technical sense. In view of the impressive degree of similarity between the basic traits of the arguments presented in TBL and in the above passage from the *Sarvāstivādin* treatise, and also in view of some basic vocabulary (*huáng* 黃, *qīng* 青, *bái* 白) and phrasing (*qīng* [. . .] *fēi huáng* 青非黃 vs. *huáng fēi qīng* 黃非青) the two share, we may thus ask ourselves whether these opening lines of the third part of TBL do in fact contain traces of the same principle of composition which we also saw at work in the case of the integration of materials from the ‘Canons’ into JBL. When that editor left out the phrase “*jiān bái*”, which had possibly brought the passage to his attention in the first place, he arguably did so to cover his tracks. The compiler of TBL might have used the Mohist and Buddhist texts under discussion here in precisely the same way, leaving out the crucial term *jìn*, which

181 Cf. Graham 1978: 437, also for possible emendations.

occurs both in the ‘Canons’ and in the Buddhist treatise, and which possibly inspired him to connect these two texts.

As we have seen, a considerable number of TBL’s peculiarities suggest that its compiler was strongly influenced by Buddhist debates and texts. If this is true, we can also trace the reason his attention was caught by the short passage from MS B4. In this passage, the Mohist text discusses the term 法 and contains several instances of the character 相, and while in the Mohist original these stand for the term ‘criterion’ and the common adverb ‘mutually’, it is easy to see why a Buddhist-inspired compiler sometime after the late fourth century CE might have understood them in the sense of ‘dharma’ and ‘distinguishing mark’ (*lakṣaṇa* / *nimitta*), subsequently associating them with the problem of the relation between entities and their varying temporal characteristics. It is precisely this problem – which is the core of *Sarvāstivādin* speculations about the reality of past, present, and future *dharmas* – that TBL seems to allude to in its remaining sections. Again, while it is clear that any of these observations in isolation cannot be conclusive, these single pieces of evidence weave a whole web that pervades the entire TBL. And while the well-documented cases of similar textual borrowing from the Mohist ‘Canons’ and their concomitant reconceptualizations are no proof of a suspected Buddhist influence, they doubtlessly lend our hypothesis more credence.

In sum, it appears that MSL and especially TBL are replete with traces that point toward a Buddhist background that informed their putative medieval compilers. Moreover, these traces seem so strong at times that it is hard to imagine that the editors even tried to conceal them. Rather, it appears that these allusions were invoked on purpose. As for the date of composition, it is again difficult to be precise. However, while the Buddhist references in JBL – with the exception of the *Chéngshìlùn* – point toward the early decades of the Táng period, the texts that are possibly reflected in TBL mostly date from the early fifth century CE and earlier. We will take up the problem of the *GSLZ*’s possible date of composition again below.

6 A Buddhist Capstone? Paradox and Subtlety in JBL and ZWL

Two terms are widely considered key to an interpretation of the *GSLZ*: *cáng* 藏 (‘to contain/to conceal/to hide’) and *zhǐ* 指 (‘to point/to mark’). Both only occur in a single chapter section – the former in JBL, the latter in ZWL. Thus the *GSLZ* presents no *explicit* discussion of their mutual relation. Nevertheless, there are

terminological commonalities between these two chapters that can be read as “signs” of an underlying conceptual connection. As indicated above, both use the terms *jiān* 兼 (‘to combine’) and *wù* 物 (‘thing’), and the crucial – though admittedly short – passage from JBL suggests that it considers concrete things (*wù*) as ‘conjoining’ (*jiān*) a perceived quality and a conceived thing.¹⁸² As we saw above, JBL holds that qualities subsist in the hidden (*cáng*), even if they are not manifest in any concrete thing – that is, even if they are not actually perceived. However, qualities turn into the ‘markers’ or ‘indicators’ that point out a concrete and particular thing as soon as they are combined with an intellectual – and hence necessarily abstract – “thing concept”. It seems to be these concrete things that the ZWL subsumes under the compound expression *zhǐ wù* 指物 – something like “indicated things”.¹⁸³ The term ‘thing’ in the *GSLZ* would thus be used equivocally in referring to both concrete perceptual things (“individuals”) and abstract intellectual things (“universals”).¹⁸⁴ Although this interpretation of the relation between ‘subsistents’ and ‘pointers’ closely follows Shěn Yǒudǐng,¹⁸⁵ most modern interpreters generally agree – if not necessarily on the details – at least on the relevance of the relationship between these two crucial concepts for any sustained understanding the *GSLZ*.

In contrast to other scholars, Shěn combines his analysis with an additional observation. He notes that the technical interpretation of *zhǐ*, in the sense of a quality “signaling” a thing through its attributes, is unattested in other purported Warring States texts, such as the Mohist ‘Canons’ or the *Xúnzǐ*. He argues that the word there is generally used in the concrete sense of ‘finger’ or in the derived verbal sense of ‘to point at’, which was common during the pre-imperial period.¹⁸⁶ This is the major reason why Shěn concludes that ZWL is an early medieval compilation. Unlike Graham, who is convinced of its antiquity, Shěn thus thinks that it was composed at roughly the same time as JBL – which, as we have seen, is partly culled from the ‘Canons’. Moreover, the close

182 “Hard is hard even when not yet joined with stone, [thus] constituting a thing combination (?). Even when it has not yet formed a combination with a thing, hard is necessarily hard; it does not make a stone hard, [i.e.] it is not hard as a thing. Even when there is nothing like hard in the world, hard is already contained (in the hidden)” (曰：「堅未與石為堅，而物兼。未與物為兼，而堅必堅；其不堅石、物而堅。天下未有若堅而堅藏。」).

183 Shěn 1992a: 495–497.

184 Cf. the analogous analysis in roughly contemporaneous Buddhist sources, which characterize perception via the presence of qualities as “individual marks” (*zìxiàng* 自相) and conception via the combined presence of both “individual” and “shared marks” (‘universals’; *gòngxiàng* 共相), as briefly mentioned above, p. 471.

185 For Shěn’s analysis of ZWL, see his 1992e.

186 Shěn 1992a: 495.

terminological connections between the two chapters, as well as the fact that JBL seems to provide the essential conceptual specifications for making sense of ZWL, have led him to assume not only that both were written by the same author,¹⁸⁷ but that ZWL was in fact composed on the basis of, and hence after, JBL.¹⁸⁸

Graham, who considers ZWL ancient, has in turn pointed out the similarities between a couple of formulations in JBL and their parallels in ZWL. He suggests that JBL in fact imitates ZWL, an assumption which obviously contradicts Shěn's idea that ZWL is older than JBL.¹⁸⁹ The following is one of the passages in JBL which, according to Graham, is formulated on the precedent of ZWL:

<p>[27] <i>GSLZ</i>, JBL (DZ/1172/3/2v(16v)/6):
不定者兼，惡乎其石也？</p> <p>If two undefined entities [i.e. the hard and the white] are combined, how could they be a stone?</p> | <p><i>GSLZ</i>, ZWL (DZ/1172/2/2r[10r]/5):
且指者天下之所兼。</p> <p>Now, as for pointers, they are what the world combines.</p> |
|---|---|

If the translations I've suggested are accepted, then JBL argues that the combination of something white and something hard does not allow one to determine the kind of thing to which these two qualities are attributed. The stone, which one wrongly believes one sees, is only contributed via one's conception. In other words, the combination of various perceptions into a single thing is a function of the mind. The parallel in ZWL seems to hold that 'markers' of things are those 'places' in the world highlighted by qualities which partake in combinations – that is, places which have been attached to a specific kind of thing in one's conception. Regardless of the accuracy of this interpretation, since the first modern commentator Yú Yuè 俞樾 (1821–1907), many scholars have argued that the character 兼 in the ZWL passage above is in fact a corruption of an original 無 ('to not exist').¹⁹⁰ It is to Páng Pú's 龐樸 (1928–2015) credit that he

¹⁸⁷ Shěn attributes the composition of these two chapters to the early fourth-century CE scholar Yuán Yú 爰俞; see Shěn 1992a: 497–498 (ZWL), 507 (JBL). Kandel has also suggested that Yuán is the compiler of the entire extant *GSLZ*; see Kandel 1974: 23–24.

¹⁸⁸ Shěn holds that ZWL was “deeply influenced” by JBL; cf. Shěn 1992a: 497. This obviously implies that JBL is earlier than ZWL.

¹⁸⁹ Graham 1956/7: 181, esp. n. 4. JBL also evinces striking parallels with BML, but not with the remaining chapters of the *GSLZ*. For details, cf. illustration [6], pp. 451–453 above.

¹⁹⁰ Cf. the following character variants of 兼 and 無: 兼 (兼, clerical script, *Wáng Jīduàn bēi* 王基斷碑, Three Kingdom period, third c. CE, *Zhōngguó shǔfǎ dà zìdiǎn*, 'Lìshū', p. 65) vs. 兼 (無, clerical, Jūyán bamboo slips 居延, Hàn, 'Lìshū', *ibid.*, p. 334); 兼 (兼, regular script, Ōuyáng

pointed out that it was primarily the undesirable disappearance of 兼 from ZWL that may have prevented scholars from adopting Yú's proposal.¹⁹¹ *Jiān* 兼 is one of the rare "technical" terms which occur in more than one chapter of the *GSLZ*. It thus seems to allow for a consistent interpretation, if not of the entire collection, then at least of JBL and ZWL. However, a closer look at the context of the sentence in ZWL reveals that it is in fact embedded in a larger argument, which is mostly parallel in structure to another argument at the beginning of ZWL. This formal criterion clearly supports Yú's emendation.¹⁹² How are these two kinds of conflicting evidence to be weighed against each other? Do we decide in favor of philosophical consistency in an attempt to preserve the received formulation of ZWL? This would lead to an interpretation in accordance with the manifestly parallel passage in JBL. Or do we have to privilege the kind of intra-textual consistency which would clearly support Yú's emendation?

While we are not forced to take sides, our observations still allow us to draw a conclusion that is relevant to Shěn's hypothesis regarding authorship. If Yú's emendation is correct – as I think it is – then the presence of 兼 in ZWL is an accidental result of textual corruption and cannot be interpreted in Shěn's sense as an intentional choice made by its author on the basis of the term's definition in JBL. Yet if we stick to the hypothesis that JBL is a medieval production which imitates and copies from a whole array of other texts, we have to infer that we should follow Graham and invert the direction of influence Shěn suggested: it must have been JBL which was influenced by ZWL, rather than the other way round. Whether or not ZWL is ancient, we can with some degree of plausibility exclude the assertion that it was construed on the model of JBL. The aspect of Shěn's hypothesis that claims the opposite appears untenable. Rather, it seems that the unknown composer of JBL construed his piece with reference to an already corrupted version of ZWL. The importance he attributed to the term 兼 thus most likely results from his reinterpretation of ZWL. Below, we shall return to the issue of the relevance of this term as well as to the problem of the relationship between ZWL, its key term *zhǐ*, and JBL.

Xún 歐陽詢 (557–641), op.cit., 'Kǎishū', p. 72) vs. 無 (無, regular, Northern and Southern Dynasties (420–581), ibid., p. 381).

¹⁹¹ Páng 1979: 22–23.

¹⁹² For a detailed discussion, see Suter, forthcoming.

6.1 藏/臧 – Turning a Personal Name into a Philosophical Term: Possible Buddhist Implications

At this point, we first turn our attention to the term *cáng*, as used in JBL. It appears that this term has no precedent in ancient literature. However, the character that captures this crucial notion is a variant of 臧 *Zāng*, a common personal name in ancient China, which was used by the Mohists as a standard example for an individual constant – Graham has consistently rendered it as “Jack”.¹⁹³ *Zāng* is a well-known figure. Crucially, he appears in what is probably the earliest account of Gōngsūn Lóng’s rhetorical quick-wittedness: an anecdote transmitted in the *Lǚshì Chūnqiū* 呂氏春秋, completed around 239 BCE. This text, in which Gōngsūn Lóng is first and foremost portrayed as a prudent, moderating political adviser, reports that, in a debate with a member of the Kǒng 孔 clan, he succeeded in convincing his patron, the lord of Píngyuán 平原 (Zhào Shèng 趙勝, 308–251 BCE), chancellor of the state of Zhào 趙, that this very *Zāng* had “three front teeth” (*sān yá* 三牙). After the defeated descendant of Master Kǒng, in a private conversation, convinces the lord of Píngyuán of the untenability of Gōngsūn Lóng’s claim, the *Lǚshì Chūnqiū* tells us that the latter forbids Gōngsūn Lóng to undertake any further disputations with Kǒng.¹⁹⁴ One of the oldest reports on our debater’s eloquence is thus, at the same time, an account of his shameful repudiation.

The incident at the lord of Píngyuán’s court is also included in the ‘Gōngsūn Lóng’ chapter of the *Kǒngcóngzǐ*.¹⁹⁵ And it is this version of the story which also corroborates the fact that the claim which eventually provoked Gōngsūn Lóng’s rebuke was indeed about *Zāng* – the name of this all-purpose guy is corrupted to 藏 in the older *Lǚshì Chūnqiū* account. The variant transmitted in the *Kǒngcóngzǐ* further clarifies that the debate revolved around the question of whether this person had three ‘ears’ (*ěr* 耳) rather than three ‘teeth’ (*yá* 牙). The portrait of Gōngsūn Lóng in the eponymous chapter of the *Kǒngcóngzǐ* – most probably a work dating from the third century CE – exhibits striking parallels with the introductory JF chapter of the *GSLZ*. Apart from a rather formalized introductory section and a short sketch of the “white horse” argument at the very beginning, all the incidents of Gōngsūn Lóng’s life that JF reports are also contained in the *Kǒngcóngzǐ*. While a quotation from the medieval scholar Liú Jùn 劉峻 (styled Xiàobiāo 孝標, 462–521 CE) suggests that a previous version of the

¹⁹³ Graham 1978: 226–227.

¹⁹⁴ *Lǚshì Chūnqiū*, Shěnyínglǎn 審應覽, ‘Líwèi’ 離謂, in Gāo 1996: 226.

¹⁹⁵ *Kǒngcóngzǐ*, ‘Gōngsūn Lóng’ 3, in Fù 2011: 283.

Kǒngcóngzǐ might also have contained an outline of the white horse argument,¹⁹⁶ the *GSLZ* stands out due to one suspicious omission: while the *Kǒngcóngzǐ* chapter underlines the superiority of Kǒng Chuān 孔穿, the descendant of Confucius who eventually prevailed over Gōngsūn Lóng, by concluding its report on the debater's life with the anecdote about their controversy concerning Jack's three ears, the *GSLZ* does not mention this incident at all. However, one phrase in the *GSLZ* – more precisely, in JBL – is worded in a way that is suspiciously reminiscent of the rather uninspiring hoax about Jack. At one point, the dialogue has Gōngsūn Lóng's opponent suggest, partly in the words of the Mohist 'Canons', that "given that the hard, the white, and the stone [within a hard white stone] are not outside each other, isn't it admissible to say that [the area they fill up] contains three?" (堅白石不相外, 藏三, 可乎?).¹⁹⁷ While the similarities between the phrases 藏三可, 藏三耳 (*Kǒngcóngzǐ*), and 藏三牙 (*Lǚshì Chūnqiū*) are evident,¹⁹⁸ it is interesting that the *Old Commentary* has the following to say about this passage:

[28] *Jiùzhù* (DZ/1172/3/2r[16r]/7a¹⁹⁹–2v[16v]/1b):

夫物各有名，而名各有實。故：得白名者自有白之實，得堅名者亦有堅之實也。然視石者見白之實，不見堅之實。不見堅之實，則堅離於白矣。故曰：見與不見謂之離，則知之與不知亦離矣。於石一也，堅與白二也。此三名有實，則不相盈也。名不相盈，則素離矣。素離而不見，故謂之藏。
呂氏春秋曰：公孫龍與魯孔穿對辭於趙平原家藏三耳，盖以此篇為辯。

¹⁹⁶ In his commentary on the *Shishuō Xīnyǔ* 世說新語, he quotes from the *Kǒngcóngzǐ* a summary of the white horse argument, which is today only transmitted in BML: 馬者所以命形，白者所以命色。夫命色者非命形。故曰白馬非馬也。 (“‘Horse’ is something by which you name a shape, ‘white’ is something by which you name a color. Now, what names a color is not what names a shape, and therefore it says, white horse is not horse”); *Shishuō Xīnyǔ*, “Wénxué” 24, in Xú 1989: 117; BML, DZ/1172/1/5r/2–4. Cf. Kandel 1974: 128.

¹⁹⁷ JBL, DZ/1172/3/1v[15v]/4–5.

¹⁹⁸ Shěn Yǒudǐng points toward the similarity of the characters 耳, 牙, and 可 in cursive script and seems to waver between attributing this modification of the phrase in JBL to an innocent reinterpretation by the compiler (Shěn 1992a: 504) or to an intentional distortion (Shěn 1992c [1989]: 452: “I suspect that the author of JBL suppressed this record of the *Lǚshì Chūnqiū* on purpose, thinking that these passages [...], which show disdain for Gōngsūn Lóng, did not align with the facts, and that the character 藏 has a deep meaning, namely what the extant JBL calls *zì cáng* 自藏 (‘self-contained’).” In an earlier publication, Shěn called this reinterpretation downright ridiculous; see Shěn 1992d [1978]: 272.

¹⁹⁹ Lowercase letters indicate the column numbers of the commentary. The columns in the original commentary are only half the breadth of those of the main text.

Now, among things, every one has a name, and among names, every one has a reality. For this reason, what receives the name ‘white’ is something which has in itself the reality of whiteness, just as something that receives the name ‘hard’ has in itself the reality of hardness. But if you look at a stone, you see the reality of whiteness, you don’t see the reality of hardness. And as you don’t see the reality of hardness, hardness is already separate from whiteness. Therefore it says: when what is visible and what is invisible are called separate (from each other), then to be conscious and unconscious of something are also separate (from each other). To be in a stone is one, hard and white are two. If these three names have their reality, they do not fill each other up. And as names do not fill each other up, they are genuinely separate. They are genuinely separate and invisible, and that is why one calls them contained (‘hidden’). *When in the Lǚshì Chūnqiū it says that Gōngsūn Lóng and Kǒng Chuān from Lǚ at the home of the lord of Píngyuán disputed about “[the inside] simply contains three” (a.k.a. “Zāng has three ears”), then it was this chapter about which they were debating.*

This commentary was already being quoted in the Táng period, a fact which clearly disproves the claim in the preface of the *GSLZ* that attributes it to the Sòng scholar Xiè Xīshēn.²⁰⁰ For our preliminary summary here, it is enough to note that the commentator, whoever he may have been, explicitly relates the argument about the “three hidden” entities of hard, white, and stone in JBL to the anecdote about Zāng’s three ears. We can infer that the compilers of the *GSLZ* – possibly in an attempt to avoid the unedifying story about the debater’s purported abasement – omitted the latter story from the introductory JF chapter, which otherwise seems to be largely based on, or at least an elaboration of, the same anecdotal material as the ‘Gōngsūn Lóng’ chapter of the *Kǒngcóngzǐ*.²⁰¹ At the same time, the compiler of JBL seems not only to have exquisitely woven a variation of the fatal phrase into his piece, but also to have drawn one of the key terms of his philosophy from it. And indeed, the

200 Graham 1956/7: 169–170; Kandel 1974: 139 n. 7.

201 The main section of JF looks like a thorough revision and rearrangement of the ‘Gōngsūn Lóng’ chapter in the *Kǒngcóngzǐ* (Fù 2011: 280–296). It gathers the very same anecdotes. It only omits Zīgāo’s 子高 (Kǒng Chuān’s) rather detailed refutation of Gōngsūn Lóng’s white horse argument – situated by the authors of the *Kǒngcóngzǐ* in a public audience rather than in a private conversation, as in the *Lǚshì Chūnqiū* –, a somewhat displaced story about Zīgāo’s assessment of a certain Cáo Liáng 曹良, and most notably, the Confucian’s triumph in the debate about Jack’s three ears.

commentator – let us assume he was somebody other than the compiler himself – seems to join in his game: after providing a short explanation of the crucial term *cáng*, he goes on not only to associate this sophisticated notion with the famous story about the dispute between Gōngsūn Lóng and the scion of the house of Kǒng, but also to indicate that the sophist's apparent defeat was in fact an overwhelming victory, even though neither Gōngsūn Lóng's contemporaries nor the subsequent tradition were able to grasp the gist of his argument. Apparently, the compiler's elevation of the term *cáng* to the status of a cue for understanding the entire *GSLZ* – whether wittingly or unwittingly – laid the groundwork for a marvelous inversion of the deepest blemish on his career into a hidden yet compelling intellectual triumph. It is indeed hard to imagine a more formidable rehabilitation of Gōngsūn Lóng!

However, while early texts such as the *Xúnzǐ* relate verbal and deverbal uses of the term 臧 (and its equivalent 藏) to functions of the mind,²⁰² nothing seems to suggest that its technical meaning in JBL has any straightforward precedent in the ancient literature. And if, as suggested above, JBL is a rather late compilation, the spread of the character 藏 as an equivalent to the Sanskrit *garbha* – conventionally rendered as ‘womb’ –²⁰³ in the context of the translation of the *Tathāgātagarbhāsūtra* and related texts from the fifth century CE onward,²⁰⁴ would have provided a manifest source of inspiration for designating something conceived of as subsistent and virtual, as opposed to existent and actual, with precisely this word. Although this background seems to point in a different doctrinal direction than the Buddhist sources discussed thus far, it is still worth taking into account the fact that Kumārajīva – the translator responsible for the *Chéngshìlùn* with its reverberations in JBL – also produced a Chinese translation of the rather marginal *Fóshuō huāshǒu jīng* 佛說華手經

202 Thus the *Xúnzǐ* uses this term (written 臧) to capture the human potential to feel several emotions which provide the basis for various evaluations (‘Tiānlùn’ 天論 4, in Wáng 1997: 309). Moreover, it is used to refer to intentions stored up in one’s mind for future realization having the potential to lead to biased views, and hence misjudgments (‘Jiěbì’ 解蔽 8, in Wáng 1997: 395–396).

203 Zimmermann (2002: 30 n. 14) has plausibly suggested that the translation of *garbha*, which – besides ‘embryo’ or ‘womb’, as in established translations of the term – can also mean an ‘interior chamber’, can be traced back to the use of the word *zàng* (today written 臧) in the sense of ‘inner organ’, a notion which, in traditional Chinese medicine, has a distinct sense of a chamber or an abode, or more simply put, a ‘container’ of different agencies. Radich (2015: 194–197) suggests that the semantic dimension of secrecy in translations, such as ‘to hide’ and ‘to conceal’, may also have played a role.

204 The *Tathāgātagarbhāsūtra* was first translated by Buddhahadra (Fótuóbátuóluó 佛陀跋陀羅, 359–429) in 420 CE. Cf. e.g. Liu 1989.

(T 16, no. 657, **Kuśalamūlasamparigrahasūtra*, Sūtra of Grasping the Fruits of Karmic Retribution) in 406 CE. While this *sūtra* is not commonly attributed to the *tathāgatagarbha* tradition, it reports that Buddha, in his instruction of bodhisattva Sāramati (Chin. Jiānyì 堅意 [!]),²⁰⁵ resorts to the term 藏 to capture the idea of “hidden containers” from which all manifest differentiations arise. However manifest and fundamental the differences between this interpretation and JBL may appear, this early fifth-century CE translation is still instructive, as it uses the term 藏 for a plurality of non-localizable, subsistent, or virtual containers understood as the source of distinguishable elements. Importantly, these containers are further attributed to different categories, most notably including *rūpa* (Chin. sè 色). Notwithstanding these similarities to the use of the term *cāng* in JBL, the relevance of this evidence to the question of the composition of the latter obviously remains unclear. At the same time, we should keep in mind that the reasons for dating JBL to the fifth century (or later) are completely independent of any suggested relationship to Buddhist sources. If the chapter indeed

205 *Fóshuō huāshǒu jīng* 佛說華手經 (T 16, no. 657, fasc. 10, p. 203): “堅意！無礙際者即無邊際，無邊際者即是一切眾生性也，是名際門。入是際門，則能開演千億法藏。此法藏者，即非藏也。堅意！如來眾法藏中，有所說法，皆說是際。復有色藏，受、想、行、識藏，是藏，非藏，不自在藏，是名諸藏以阿字門入。” (“Sāramati! The confines of the unobstructed coincide with the confines of the unlimited, and the confines of the unlimited coincide with the nature of all sentient beings. It is this (nature) I call the ‘gate to the confines’ (of non-obstruction and non-limitation). If you enter this gate to the confines (of non-obstruction and non-limitation), you will be able to disclose the (hidden) container that deploys the myriad factors (*dharma*s). Coincidentally, however, this container of factors (*dharma*s) is *not* in fact a container. Sāramati! When inside the container of all factors (*dharma*s) there are any factors (*dharma*) which can be explained by the thus-come, they all explain this confine (of the non-obstructed and non-limited). Moreover, there are also the containers of matter-form (*rūpa*), the containers [of the four mental *skandhas*] of feeling, ideation, action, and cognition. These containers are not containers; they do not contain in the sense of resting in themselves. The containers [bearing] all of these names are entered through the ‘gate’ of the letter ‘a’.”). However difficult this passage appears when read in isolation, it obviously appeals to the double function of the Sankrit vowel ‘a’ as an *alpha privativum* (a negative prefix) and as the inherent vowel which, in Indic writing systems – technically known as *abugidas* or *alphasyllabaries* – is implied in all basic consonants and, if rendered explicit, is listed first in the series of vowels. The analogy seems to suggest that just as all words – and therefore linguistic marks of distinction – arise from the implicit vowel ‘a’, all arising distinctions derive from and are contained in the hidden confines of the unobstructed and unlimited, which can only be approximated through the gate of negation. The letter for the vowel ‘a’ also stands at the beginning of the Buddhist *arapacana* syllabaries that spread to China from northwest India, in which this first letter was also explicitly associated with the negative prefix (see Brough 1977; Salomon 1990). In Tantric Buddhism, the co-occurrence of the first letter and vowel with the negative prefix later resulted in the shortest version of the *Prajñāpāramitāsūtra*, which was condensed into the single letter ‘A’ (cf. Conze 1973: vii).

appeared as late as this, then the theories about Buddha-nature which were gaining a foothold in China precisely at this point in time would doubtlessly have provided a likely source of inspiration for the reinterpretation of the crucial term *cāng* by the compilers of JBL.

6.2 指 – The *Topoi* of the ‘Pointing Finger’ and the ‘Touching Finger’ in Medieval Discourse on Language and Consciousness: Possible Implications for the *GS LZ*

As a second step, we now turn our attention from JBL to ZWL, the single chapter section of the extant *GS LZ* to (extensively) use the term *zhǐ*. As outlined above, the formulations in JBL suggest that the meaning of this word – which is nowhere explained, let alone defined – is closely related to its own notion of ‘subsistence’. With the notable exception of the seventh-century CE *Nǐ Gōngsūn Lóngzǐ lùn* mentioned above,²⁰⁶ there is not a single textual witness to the existence of a ZWL before the eleventh century CE, when the Daoist scholar Chén Jǐngyuán 陳景元 (fl. 1084 CE) related it to the ‘Qíwù lùn’ 齊物論 chapter of the *Zhuāngzǐ*. There, the Daoist classic subscribes to the isolated and hence rather obscure (and formally contradictory) claim that “*zhǐ* is not *zhǐ*” (指非指) – paralleled by the apparently analogous contention that “horse is not horse” (馬非馬). He further suggests that it is preferable to convey the purported “inscrutability” of reference by means of the negative phrase “non/is not-*zhǐ*” (and “non/is not-horse”) rather than by the positive term ‘*zhǐ*’ (and ‘horse’). Ever since, a majority of scholars has not only acknowledged this similarity, but has in fact assumed that this allusion in the *Zhuāngzǐ* refers to the ZWL chapter of the *GS LZ*, which was thus thought to predate it. The difficulty with this supposition is that, apart from this three-character phrase in the *Zhuāngzǐ*, ZWL does not contain a single (obvious) passage that parallels any other pre- or early imperial text. What is more, none of the surviving medieval commentaries on the relevant phrase in the ‘Qíwù lùn’ chapter – or, for that matter, those on a similar passage in the ‘Tiānxià’ 天下 chapter of the *Zhuāngzǐ*²⁰⁷ – ever quotes ZWL or the *GS LZ*, or

²⁰⁶ See pp. 468–470 above.

²⁰⁷ “A finger/pointing does not reach (what it points at?)” (指不至); Guō 1978: 4: 1106. This three-character phrase is given in a list of claims attributed to the debaters. It is neither commented upon nor contextualized. Isolated as it stands, it is very difficult to interpret. The first commentary by Sīmǎ Biāo 司馬彪 (d. 306) connects it with the ensuing three-character phrase (至不絕). He takes 指 in the literal sense of ‘finger’ and (somewhat helplessly) comments: “When a finger catches a thing, it is unable to catch it by itself. It needs to rely on a[nother]

even mentions the name of Gōngsūn Lóng. And while the second and third of the seven theses associated with the debater in the late third- or early fourth-century *Lièzǐ* revolve around the notions of *zhǐ* and *wù*, ('thing'), they seem to take up these examples from the twenty-two propositions which the 'Tiānxià' chapter of the *Zhuāngzǐ* associates with the debaters in general – here, the name Gōngsūn Lóng only figures as one paradigmatic example of this dubious ilk of equivocators. Not only does the *Lièzǐ* thus allude to the *Zhuāngzǐ* rather than to a purported ZWL,²⁰⁸ but it seems to understand the term *zhǐ* in the sense of 'to target', a meaning also attested in the Eastern Hàn *Shì míng* 釋名 (Explanation of Names),²⁰⁹ and further suggested by the fact that the *Lièzǐ*, before introducing its seven famous theses, relates two of Gōngsūn Lóng's stories about the skill of archers whose arrows reach their targets without touching them, and indeed without even leaving the bow.

As we have seen, Shěn Yǒudǐng considers ZWL to be a medieval production,²¹⁰ while Graham assumes it is ancient.²¹¹ While my own findings suggest that parts of ZWL might indeed be at least as old as the Mohist 'Explanations',²¹² Graham and Shizuo Amano 天野鎮雄 (1915–), the renowned Japanese expert on the *GSLZ*, have independently noted that while ZWL argues in some detail for the first part of its initial claim – namely, that “no thing is not a *zhǐ*” (物莫非指) – the second part of this first line, which contains the similarity to 'Qíwù lùn', and according to which “*zhǐ* are not *zhǐ*” (指非指), is only taken up again much later in the piece and is not actually argued for. While Graham concludes that it therefore must have been a corollary to the first claim,²¹³ Amano, in his reconstruction

thing, and catches it on this ground. However, relying on a[nother] thing itself [still] depends on (lit. 'derives from') not being detached from the finger. One (commentator?) says: 'When a finger takes fire, it does so by means of a match. When it spears a rat, it does so by means of a lance. Therefore, it relies on a[nother] thing. It is these [things such as fire and rats that] a finger does not catch' (夫指之取物, 不能自至。要假物, 故至也。然假物, 由指不絕也。一云: 指之取火以針, 刺以錐。故假于物。指是不至。); Guō 1978: 4: 1109. On this passage and its possible relations to the *Lièzǐ*, cf. pp. 447–448 above.

208 This seems to suggest that Shěn Yǒudǐng pointed in the right direction when he claimed that the crucial phrase in ZWL, “*zhǐ fēi zhǐ*”, may in fact have arisen from paradoxes such as the ones transmitted in the 'Tiānxià' chapter of the *Zhuāngzǐ*; see Guō 1978: 478; cf. Shěn 1992c (1989): 456.

209 *Shì míng* 釋名, 'Shì bīng' 釋兵 3: 天<矢>, 指也, 言其有所指向迅疾也。 (“‘Arrow’ is ‘to point at’, is to say that [an arrow] has a place (= the target) it points to and that it is sudden and swift”); see Liú/Hé/Zhū 2002: 7.3.76.

210 Shěn 1992e (1963): 267.

211 Graham 1956/7: 177.

212 See Suter, forthcoming.

213 Graham 1955: 293.

of the ZWL materials, considers it a late interpolation.²¹⁴ In spite of their divergent conclusions, Graham and Amano still agree that the crucial phrase “*zhǐ fēi zhǐ*” in the extant ZWL is somehow left dangling in the air. What seems to speak in favor of Amano’s view is an observation on the structure of ZWL: the sections of the received text show two clearly distinct modes of argumentation. Passages which explicitly disclose contradictory assumptions alternate with sections that consist of longer, repetitive strings of only loosely interconnected phrases. Two details are worth mentioning here. While the use of *yǐ wéi* 以爲 structures in the more explicit passages closely resembles the argumentative structure of BML and thus seems to suggest that they might be roughly the same age, the only repetition of the crucial phrase “*zhǐ fēi zhǐ*” in ZWL, apart from the initial line, concludes an extended passage in the second style, which is marked by parallel lines made up of pairs of repeated phrases and connected only by the interchanging particles *yě* 也 and *zhě* 者. Graham has identified this structure as a distinctive criterion that sets the allegedly “authentic” BML and ZWL apart from the “spurious” chapters (TBL, JBL, and MSL).²¹⁵ While this criterion does indeed draw a line between these two groups of texts, a cursory survey of early and medieval texts reveals that, while sequences of identical phrases subsequently serving as topic and comment, and merely interconnected by *yě* 也 and *zhě* 者, are not regularly used in early imperial or even pre-imperial texts, they do occur in Wáng Bì’s 王弼 early third-century CE essays on the *Zhōuyì* (*Zhōuyì lüèlì* 周易略例) and the *Lǎozǐ* (*Lǎozǐ wēizhǐ lìlüè* 老子微指例略). Moreover, it is precisely this structure which the compilers of TBL have employed to incorporate a short quotation from the Mohist ‘Canons’ into their text.²¹⁶

Additionally, it is worth considering that these same passages, with their repetitive strings of largely unvaried and unclear phrases, provide ZWL with an aura of profundity and obscurity. And while this characteristic seems unparalleled in the record of pre- and early imperial literature, there is one piece that contains a comparably dumbfounding degree of repetitiveness, written by the sixth-century CE Buddhist monk Rèn Dàolín 任道林. In a memorial to the emperor of the Northern Zhōu dynasty dating from 577 CE, which is transmitted in the *Guǎng hóngmíng jí* 廣弘明集 (Extended Collection on the Elucidation of the Path, compiled by Dào Xuān 道宣, 596–667), he invalidates the ruler’s comparison of the differences between their respective stages of spiritual development with the *Zhuāngzǐ*’s contrast between the phoenix and the sparrow (or the

²¹⁴ Amano 1967: 144.

²¹⁵ Graham 1956/7: 150.

²¹⁶ Cf. ex. [4] above, pp. 440–441.

swallow) with the following words, which obviously draw on the Daoist philosopher's relativist elimination of all distinctions:

- [29] *Zhōu Gāo zǔ xún Yè chútiǎn fófǎ yǒuqiánsēng Rèn Dàolín shàng biǎo qǐng kāi fǎshì* 周高祖巡鄴除珍佛法有前僧任道林上表請開法事 (Petition of Abbot Rèn Dàolín to Establish Buddhist Ceremonies on the Occasion of the Inspection by Emperor Gāozǔ of the Northern Zhōu Dynasty of the Obliteration of the Dharma in the Capital of Yè), *Guǎng Hóngmíngjī*, fasc. 52 (T 52, no. 2103, p. 156):

仰承聖旨。名義深博宗源浩污。究察莫由。事等窺天。誰測其廣。又同測海。寧識其深。若以小小於大。無大而不小。以大大於小。無小而非大。大無不大則秋毫非小小。小無不小則太山非大大。故使大大非大小。小小非小大。是則小大異於同。大小同於異。無大小之異同。何小大之同異。方知非異可異同。寧有同可同異。無同可同異非異同。無異可異同無同異。是故無同而同非同。無異而異非異。何同異而可異同。非異同而可同異。

I humbly receive your wise instruction. The meanings of its words are deep and all-encompassing, its fountainhead is abundant and overflowing. Even [when I try] to investigate and scrutinize it, there is no point from which [I] could proceed. [Someone like me] viewing the sky through the peephole of his daily affairs, how would he gauge its vastness?! This, moreover, is just the same as with the sea: how could he fathom its depth? If you assume that small[ness] is made small by big[ness], [then] there would be no big [thing] that would not be small. If you assume that big[ness] is made big by small[ness], then there would be no small [thing] that would not be big. Now, as for big[ness], if there were nothing that would not be big, then the [tip of the] thinnest hair would not be determined as small through small[ness], and if there were nothing that would not be small, even Mount Tai would not be determined as big through big[ness]. Therefore, if you assume that determining big [things] through big[ness] is not [the same] like determining small [things] through big[ness], this then [means] that small [things] and big [things] would be different in their [same]ness, and that big [things] and small [things] would be the same in their difference. If there would be no sameness of the difference of big and small, how would big [things] and small [things] in their difference be the same? Now, as we know that we have to negate that difference is able to render different what is the same, how would there be a same[ness] that would be able to render the same what is different? That there is no sameness that is able to render the same what is different, negates that different [things] are the same. That there is

no difference that is able to render different what is the same, [is to say] that there is no same [thing] that would be different. Therefore, there is no same[ness] such as to render the same what is not the same, and there is no difference such as to render different what is not different. How come the fact that by rendering the same what is different, we are able to render different what is the same, is not just to say that by rendering as different what is the same we are able to render the same what is different?

Although admittedly different from ZWL in its form – there is a patent absence of the syntactical markers so prominent there – this piece nonetheless proves that around the sixth century CE, the time of the probable editorial insertions into ZWL, there was not only a heightened interest in the paradoxical language of the *Zhuāngzǐ*, but also that examples of literary productions which came close to the kind of unusually repetitive, convoluted language that characterizes large parts of the extant ZWL abounded. At least in this respect, it does not seem unjustified to assume that this atmosphere might also have encouraged the ornamentation of a possibly much less pretentious, older version of ZWL with a “false front” of highly repetitive and intentionally allusive diction.²¹⁷

With all due caveats, these observations seem to suggest the possibility that the phrase “*zhǐ fēi zhī*”, rather than being original, might indeed be the result of a secondary editorial intervention into the text. Moreover, if we leave aside the questionable case of ZWL itself, we can further observe that references to the relevant ‘*Qíwù lùn*’ passage are absent from other works until the third century CE, when we find the crucial terms *zhǐ* and *wù* in a fictitious dialogue by Ruǎn Jí 阮籍 (210–263 CE), who uses it to establish a radically relativist “philosophy of language”, which culminates in a mystical transcendence of language.²¹⁸ Given the general prominence of the *Zhuāngzǐ* in medieval speculations about the relation between language and reality – established, at the latest, by Wáng Bì’s (226–249 CE) commentary on the *Yijing* and Guō Xiàng’s 郭象 (d. 312 CE) commentary on the *Zhuāngzǐ* – it is hardly imaginable

²¹⁷ Out of a total of some 250 characters, 指 alone occurs 49 times, 非 appears 25 times, and 物 occurs 18 times. This predilection for repetition is also reflected in the poetry of the court culture of the late Southern dynasties. One contest in educated circles consisted in reaching the highest possible number of repetitions of a single character in a poem of a fixed format and length. Thus Xiāo Yì 蕭繹 (508–555), later Emperor Yuán 元 of the Liáng dynasty, is reported to have used the character 春 23 times in a poem of 90 characters, to which his friend Bāo Quán 鮑泉 (d. 552) responded with a poem of the same length that repeated the character 新 30 times. See Jansen 2000: 88.

²¹⁸ See his *Dà Zhuāng lùn* 達莊論, in Ruǎn 1978: 31. Interestingly, Ruǎn’s use of the terms differs slightly from that attested in the received version of ‘*Qíwù lùn*’.

that a presumed medieval scholar coming across a fragmentary text, such as a possible predecessor of ZWL, which explains why “every thing is also a *zhǐ*” would not immediately have been reminded of this key passage from the *Zhuāngzǐ*. It is therefore certainly plausible that the argumentatively displaced and syntactically disconnected nature of the phrase “*zhǐ fēi zhǐ*” in ZWL indeed suggests that it was added by a medieval compiler, possibly with the intention of using this catchphrase from the *Zhuāngzǐ* to attract the attention of his audience.²¹⁹

On a more general level, and quite independent of these possibly unresolvable questions about the textual history of ZWL, we can observe that the term *zhǐ* played an eminent role in medieval discourses about language. This is true not only for the Daoists, referring to the passage from the ‘*Qíwù lùn*’ mentioned above. The notion is at least as prominent in Buddhist texts, such as the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra*²²⁰ or the *Mahāprajñāpāramitāśāstra*,²²¹ which were translated into Chinese in the first half of the fifth century CE. These texts make use of one of Buddha’s parables – namely, the illustration of the relationship between his words and their genuine import with the image of the moon and the finger. According to the Buddha, whoever wants to understand his words has to leave them behind and proceed to what they mean, just as one is unable to understand what someone pointing at the moon intends to convey unless one shifts one’s attention from the finger to the moon. From this example, the *Dàzhì dù lùn* derives a rather precise assertion about the relationship between language and meaning (*yì* 義; Skrt. *artha*). In its view, words (*yǔ* 語; Skrt. *vyañjana*; lit. ‘mark/letter’) are not meanings themselves, but are only ‘indexes’ (*zhǐ*) of meanings.²²²

Looking at the semantics of *zhǐ* since the Warring States period, we note that its meaning has undergone a far-reaching generalization involving lexicalization processes deriving from different connotations of the original concrete meanings,

219 A similar observation pertains to the famous *non sequitur* at the beginning of the extant BML, which infers from the fact that ‘horse’ denotes a shape while ‘white’ denotes a color that white horse is not horse (rather than that horse is not white); see e.g. Graham 1989: 82, 85. In spite of its weakness, this argument is attested at least since the Hàn period and eventually seems to have developed into a standard gloss for the “white horse” argument in medieval times. It is thus backed by the authority of tradition – a factor which might have motivated the compilers of the extant BML to integrate it into their text in such a prominent position, in spite of the fact that it is not really developed later on in the chapter. Not least for its argumentative sterility, Amano considers it a later interpolation; see Amano 1967: 118–119.

220 *Léngjiā ābádūluó bǎojīng* 楞伽阿跋多羅寶經, T 670, fasc. 4, p. 506.

221 *Dàzhì dù lùn* 大智度論, T 1509, p. 1229.

222 Cf. Lamotte 2001: 425.

such as ‘finger’ or ‘to point’, which were still dominant in pre- and early imperial texts. These are gradually supplemented by more abstract meanings, such as ‘essential point’ or ‘import’, during the Hàn period. By the third century CE at the latest, the word became a synonym for *zhǐ* 旨 and took on the general sense of ‘lexical meaning’.²²³ This new interpretation of *zhǐ* as ‘denotation’ – rather than designation – is crucial to the common Buddhist use, which contrasts the literal meaning (*zhǐ* 指) of a doctrine with its metalinguistic sense “義” (for disambiguation), as well as derivations of this paradigm, as exemplified in the above-mentioned definition in the *Dàzhì dù lùn*.²²⁴ At the same time, it is important to note that, in spite of these semantic developments, the original literal meaning of *zhǐ* (‘finger’ and ‘to point’) also remained intact in Buddhist interpretations of the term, as we see in the finger-moon metaphor. However, it is still debatable whether the original meaning of the term – in the particular case of the passages from the *Zhuāngzǐ* discussed above – was to be taken as literally as this. The only way to get an approximate idea of what the original meaning of the term in the *Zhuāngzǐ* might have been is to have a look at *early* interpretations of the crucial passages. What is clear is that none of the earliest surviving *Zhuāngzǐ* commentaries, dating from the third century CE onward, relates the occurrences of our term *zhǐ* 指 in the relevant passages of the ‘Qíwù lùn’ and ‘Tiānxià’ chapters to the then well-established interpretation of the term as ‘literal meaning’. Rather, they either take it in the concrete sense of ‘finger’ (as in Sīmǎ Biāo’s commentary on ‘Tiānxià’ 7)²²⁵ or associate it with the notion of *tǐ* 體 (‘unit’, ‘part’) (as in Guō Xiàng’s and Cūi Zhuàn’s 崔譔 [Eastern Jìn, 317–420 CE] commentaries on the ‘Qíwù lùn’, and also in Ruǎn Jí’s *Dá Zhuāng lùn*, as already mentioned). In spite of its prominent role in medieval discourses about the relationship between language and reality, the common focus – at least in Buddhist contexts – on the relationship between the letter of the texts and their genuine import seems only distantly related to most interpretations of *zhǐ* in the ZWL chapter of the *GSLZ* which have been suggested in the literature.

²²³ For a detailed discussion, see Suter, forthcoming.

²²⁴ Strikingly, this contrast is the exact opposite of the older usage attested in early Hàn texts. Here, it is the literal meaning that is expressed by the term *yì*, while it was *zhǐ* which was used in the sense of what a speaker intended his words to mean or to designate. Cf. *Chūnqiū Fánlù* 春秋繁露, ‘Zhúlín’ 竹林 2.1, in Zhōng 2005: 83–84, attributed to Dǒng Zhōngshū 董仲舒 (c. 179–104 BCE). In its attempt to explain contradictory uses of the terms ‘good’ and ‘bad’, this text distinguishes the literal meaning (*yì*) of these terms from what they are intended to convey in a particular context (*zhǐ*).

²²⁵ For a translation, see n. 208, pp. 508–509 above.

Still, there is one interesting exception in the corpus of Buddhist literature which seems conspicuously close to ZWL, in terms of both its formulations and its suggested sense. The *Śūraṅgamasūtra* (*Léngyán jīng* 楞嚴經) was reportedly translated into Chinese between 705 and 713 CE,²²⁶ and thus almost certainly postdates the compilation of the *GSLZ* by at least a few decades. At the same time, it is important to add that the *Śūraṅgamasūtra* was early on suspected to be an apocryphal Chinese text without a Sanskrit original, which would thus have arisen from a genuinely indigenous context.²²⁷ Despite divergent voices,²²⁸ a majority of contemporary specialists maintain this view.²²⁹ And although a reported manuscript discovery points in the opposite direction,²³⁰ it is thus not *a priori* mistaken – even in view of its obvious Indic background – to assume that it indeed expresses the concerns of an educated Chinese public in the late seventh and early eighth centuries CE. If this is true, the following excerpt and the discussion it concludes might be of some relevance to our case. In an exchange between the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī and the Buddha, the latter argues against the distinction between perception (*jiàn* 見) and perceived objects (*wù* 物):

[30] *Śūraṅgamasūtra* (大佛頂首楞嚴經 *Dà Fódǐng Shǒuléngyán jīng*, T 19, no. 945, p. 112):

是以，汝今觀見與塵種種發明，名為妄想。不能於中出是非。由是精真妙覺明性，故能令汝出指非指。

Now, it is for this reason that we name your sight and all kinds of dust particles (= objects) appearing therein mistaken imaginations. Inside of them, you cannot evade the distinction between “this” and “not this” (yes and no). It is because this pure and subtle awareness realizes your (true) nature that it allows

²²⁶ Cf. *Fóguāng dà cídiǎn*, p. 5493.

²²⁷ These doubts are almost as old as the *sūtra* itself and can be traced back to a Japanese controversy in the eighth century; see *Fóguāng dà cídiǎn*, p. 5493; Epstein 1976. Early twentieth-century specialists such as Liáng Qǐchāo (1956: 10) and Lǚ Chéng (Lǚ 2012: 71–85) both doubted the authenticity of the *Śūraṅgamasūtra*.

²²⁸ Epstein 1976.

²²⁹ Cf. Hurvitz 1967: 482, 484; Faure 1991: 231 n. 3.

²³⁰ According to a recent overview by Lǐ Xuézhú, there are reports of a fragment of the *Śūraṅgamasūtra* in Sanskrit, in a palm leaf manuscript of some 200 pages in length, dating from the Táng period, preserved in the Pǔtí 菩提 monastery in Nányáng; see Lǐ 2010: 55–56.

you to evade the distinction between “*pointed out*” and “*not pointed out*”.²³¹

This passage is noteworthy for two reasons: First, assuming that the formulation “*zhǐ fēi zhǐ*”, a common allusion to the *Zhuāngzǐ* in other medieval texts, is indeed intended to invoke the Daoist master, this would mean that, by the early eighth century CE, the two *topoi* of the ‘index’ and the ‘moon’ and the ‘index’ and the ‘horse’ would have merged into one. Second, and possibly more importantly, the term *zhǐ* is not only used here in the literal sense of ‘forefinger’ or ‘index’, but is applied to a much more concrete situation than in the reflections on the signifying relationship between language and meaning in texts such as the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra* or the *Dàzhì dù lùn*.

This becomes evident when we look at the discussion preceding the Buddha’s instruction to Mañjuśrī, as mentioned above. There, Ānanda queries the Buddha about the nature of ‘perceiving’ and ‘perception’ (*jiàn* 見, *jiànjīng* 見精). Their dialogue culminates in Ānanda’s insight that both the claim that perception is *in* or *among* the things perceived and the opposite contention that it is *not* in them must be refuted. The following are the two crucial passages of this dialogue:

[31] *Śūraṅgamasūtra* (p. 112):

阿難言：我今於此重聞
講堂遠泊恒河上觀日月
舉手所指縱目所觀，指
皆是物無是見者。世尊
如佛所說，況我有漏初
學聲聞，乃至菩薩亦不
能於萬物象前剖出精見
離一切物別有自性。
[...]

Ānanda said: Now, looking from the many towers of this lecture hall high up to the moon or sun above the Ganges, *whatever* I lift my hand to *point at*, whatever my eyes rise to, *all of it is a thing, and there is none that would be sight*. World Honored One, if it is as the Buddha has explained, no one starting from us, who are still in the stream of contamination and only at the beginning stage of listeners (*śrāvakas*), up to the Bodhisattvas would be able to dissect from the images of the ten thousand things in front of him [that] *some essential sight as separated from and additional to all things would have its own being (existence)*. [...]

²³¹ A more idiomatic translation by Charles Luk reads as follows: “Therefore, if you discern seeing and its objects and give rise to all kinds of (mental) creation, this is wrong thinking which will prevent you from getting out of this dual condition of ‘is’ and ‘is not.’ (If you look into them by means of) this true, essential, wonderful, bright, and enlightened Nature, it will enable you to avoid this duality”; Luk 1966: 73.

阿難言：我實遍見此祇陀林不知是中何者非見，何以故？若樹非見，云何見樹？若樹即見，復云何樹？如是乃至若空非見，云何為空？若空即見，復云何空？

我又思惟是萬象中，微細發明無非見者。[...]

Ānanda said: Why is it that from among all I see from this Jetavana grove I don't know what inside of it would not be sight? If the trees would not be sight, why would I see trees? If the trees simply were sight, then why again would they be *trees*? So it goes on to transparency (lit. emptiness). If it would not be sight, why would I take it for transparent? And if transparency were just sight, why then would it be transparent?

I moreover think that among all the ten thousand phenomena (images), *even the faintest ones that show up, there is none that would not be sight.* [...]

The first excerpt is interesting in that it contains an isolated instance of *zhǐ* (lit. 'index' or 'to indicate') in the same sense as the explicit relative construction "*suǒ zhǐ*" ("what is indicated/the one indicated") in the preceding clause. It is precisely this reading of an unmarked *zhǐ*, in the sense of what surfaces as a passive participle in the translation, that underlies many current interpretations of ZWL, which assume that *zhǐ* has to be taken in the literal sense of 'to point'.²³² This is relevant because, as far as I can see, in the pre- and early imperial literature there is no uncontroversial evidence for this use of *zhǐ* with a meaning of 'the pointed out' that would be comparable to this example from the *Śūraṅgama-sūtra*. And although Ānanda and Buddha only discuss the things they are able to see from their actual position in the Jetavana grove – rather than the domain of all things that exist – the formulation resorts to a universal claim: whatever can be pointed out is a thing; none of these is sight or perception, which lacks an existence or a presence comparable to that of things. Although this proposition ("nothing pointed out is not thing") is obviously the inversion of what ZWL claims – at least according to certain interpretations ("no thing is not pointed out") – it still pertains to a purported connection between the same *relata*.²³³

²³² This is true of Graham's influential interpretation (1986: 101–106, repr. in Graham 1990a: 193–215, and taken up again in Graham 1989: 90–94). It also holds for Cheng and Swain (1970: 138), who translate *zhǐ* both as "act of reference" and as "object of reference".

²³³ The relationship is also more complex than in ZWL. While in the ZWL there is a binary relation between 'things' and 'indexes' the *Śūraṅgamasūtra* invokes a tripartite relation between 'things', 'indexes/indicatables', and 'sight/perception'. 'Indication' is first used as a criterion to separate 'things' (the 'indicatables') from 'sight/perception' (the 'non-indicatable'). The first quote above thus claims that 'indicatable' is equivalent to 'thing' and excludes 'sight/perception', which is a 'non-thing'. The second passage then negates this distinction, claiming that all 'indicatable things' are also 'sight/perception' – in the sense that their presence

In the final passage of the second excerpt, the focus eventually changes. Here, Ānanda establishes a connection between the terms ‘thing’ and ‘sight’ – the latter of which was only implicitly or negatively referred to previously as “what is not (a) thing”. He now proceeds to claim that “no thing is not sight” – that is, every thing is sight. This step evidently involves an implicit qualification of the very term in question: while ‘sight’ (*jiàn*) in the first case was understood in the sense of the faculty or activity that *sees*, it is now interpreted in the sense of a phenomenon that is *seen*. Thus, *jiàn* (that which is *seeing*) is not *jiàn* (that which is *seen*). This is precisely the structure underlying certain interpretative strategies of contemporary readings of the opening line of ZWL, only that there the “ambiguous” term is not *jiàn* (seeing/seen), but *zhǐ* (pointing out/pointed out). Note that the language of the *Śūraṅgamasūtra* explicitly equates *zhǐ* with *suǒ zhǐ*, just as it also uses *jiàn* in the sense of *suǒ jiàn* – that is, unlike pre-imperial Chinese, it allows for a passive reading of an unmodified *zhǐ*. Note also that the discourse of pointing is situated in a context of ‘specifying’ designations into ‘such’ (*shì* 是) and ‘non-such’ (*fēi* 非) – that is, into a discourse of *naming*. To be sure, the concept of ‘seeing’ plays no role whatsoever in ZWL itself. But let us keep in mind that it is the *relationship* between JBL and ZWL which we are addressing in our present discussion. As soon as we shift our attention to JBL, we find in the final section a prolonged reflection on the ‘agent’ who synthesizes perceptions into unified conceptions. This passage concludes that it is *shén* 神 (‘mind’ or ‘spirit’) – rather than the senses – which *sees* (*jiàn* 見) (and ‘perceives’, *zhī* 知) qualities *as* attributes of complex things. Even if the problem of perception was possibly not at issue in a putative original ZWL, the integration of this text into the larger whole of the *GSLZ*, together with the explicit references in JBL, clearly complement this dimension.

Thus we could argue that the core of the discussion in the *Śūraṅgamasūtra* above, the problem of the relation between perception and perceived things, is imposed on ZWL due to the specific way it was included in the *GSLZ*. Note also that although this degree of explicitness and similarity to ZWL is unique to the *Śūraṅgamasūtra*, other Buddhist-inspired Táng texts dating from the seventh century CE – roughly the time when the extant *GSLZ* was most probably composed – also engage in a similar discourse on the relation between pointing and designation or naming.²³⁴

involves the actuality of the presenting faculty of sight. Thus we have the contradictory claims that no thing is sight and that all things are sight.

234 An admittedly isolated and therefore difficult case is the *Xuánzhū lù* 玄朱錄 (Accounts of the Black Pearl) by Wáng Xuánlǎn 王玄覽 (a.k.a. Wáng Huī 王暉, 626–697, compiled by Wáng Xiāo 王霄, fl. 671) (see De Meyer 2004).

Our discussion of the comparatively late dialogue between Buddha, Mañjuśrī, and Ānanda on the relationship between seeing and being seen has thus brought us to the problem of consciousness. And it is precisely in this context that the idea of the finger has long played a crucial role in Buddhist debates, though not in its function as an index pointing at things, but rather as the organ of touch. The *Sarvāstivādin*s refuse the notion of self-awareness on the basis of their view that nothing can cause or condition itself. Among other means, they illustrate their conclusion that awareness can therefore only act as a condition of things *other* than itself with the example of the fingertip which cannot touch itself.²³⁵

This example is in fact pervasive in Buddhist texts well beyond the *abhidharma* literature. Its standard formulation in Chinese, as documented in the *Abhidharmamahāvibhāṣāśāstra* (T 1545), is taken up in anti-*Sarvāstivādin* texts of *hīnayānic* and *mahāyānic* orientation alike. The examples below are taken from the translations of the *Chéngshílùn* and the *Lānkāvatārasūtra*, respectively:

[32a] *Abhidharmamahāvibhāṣāśāstra* (T 27, no. 1545, p. 43)

世間現見，指端不自觸，刀刃不自割，瞳子不自見，壯士不自負。是故，自性不知自性。	What we see in the world is the following: <i>the finger-tip cannot touch itself</i> ; the knife-blade cannot cut itself; the pupil cannot see itself; the strong man cannot carry himself. Thus [awareness] in itself cannot know itself. ²³⁶
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[32b] *Chéngshílùn*,²³⁷ fasc. 68 (p. 278):

又若心是一。一識應能取一切塵。說多心者，隨根生識。是故不能取一切塵。若心是一，以	It is also like mind being one. As one single consciousness it should be able to grasp all dust particles (= i.e. objects of
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²³⁵ See Yao 2005: 52–53.

²³⁶ Translation by Yao 2005: 52. Italics are mine.

²³⁷ A second reference to the example of the finger-tip appears in another discussion about self-awareness in fasc. 191 (p. 364): “In the *sūtra* it is said: The twofoldness (combination) of causes and conditions engenders consciousness. Because of this, there must be no consciousness which conditions itself. Again, all knowledge that would not have causes and conditions would have to be exemplified by a substance in itself that would be able to condition itself. [But] this is just like *the finger-tip unable to touch itself* or the eye unable to see itself. [the *Sarvāstivādin* position, R.S] Answer: The thing you say regarding the twofoldness of causes and conditions that engender consciousness is not definite. There is also the case that knowledge arises under the absence of conditions. Not all [knowledge] is engendered by the twofoldness of causes and conditions. Moreover, the sixth consciousness has no conditions among the sense

何障故？不取一切，故知多心。又可取法異故，能取亦異？如人或自知心，云何自體自知？如眼不自見，刀不自割，指不自觸。故心不一。

the senses). That we say that there are many minds follows from the fact that consciousness arises from roots (= sense organs). This is why [one mind] is unable to grasp all dust particles. If mind were to be identified as one, by what (kinds of objects) would it be obstructed? Because it does not grasp all (of them), we know about the multiplicity of minds. Moreover, because the *dharmas* which can be grasped are different, what is able to grasp (them) is also different. When some human being himself knows his mind, why should this be a self substance knowing itself? It is like the eye which does not see itself, the knife which does not cut itself, *like the finger which does not touch itself*. Because of this, the mind is not one.²³⁸

bases themselves. And because it has no visible factors (*dharmas*), this consciousness is unable to condition factors like colored matter (*rūpa*) etc. In case it would be able to condition them, a blind human also should see colored matter. At this time, the manifold factors (*dharmas*) in his various consciousnesses would be either in the past or in the future. But as in the past and the future there are no factors (*dharmas*) what should they condition? It is only to negate a distinguishing spirit (soul) that you say (it) like this.” (經中說：二因緣生識。是故不應有自緣智。又諸智無有因緣譬喻能緣自體。如指端不能自觸，眼不能自見。答曰。汝說二因緣生識此事不定，亦有無緣生智。非一切皆從二因緣生。又第六識於自陰中都無所緣。無現法故是識不能緣色等法。若能緣者盲人亦應見色。此人爾時心心數法，在去來中。去來無法為何所緣。但遮計神故如是說。). For Sastri’s slightly diverging translation see Sastri 1978: 474.

238 Sastri’s partial translation runs as follows: “If it is one, the same mind will cognize all objects. For the advocate of several minds the consciousness arises in accordance with each sense organ. If it is one, by what impediment does it not cognize all things? The subject differs on account of its different object; e.g. certain person experiences his own mind sometimes. How does the self form experience of its own self? The eye does not see its self and the finger does not touch its own tip. Hence the mind is not one.” (Sastri 1978: 142).

[32c] *Laṅkāvatārasūtra* (*Dàshèng rù léngqié jīng* 大乘入楞伽經), tr. Śikṣānanda (Shíchánántuó 實叉難陀, 652–710) (T 16, no. 672, p. 634):

心雖成二分，而心無二相。
如刀不自割，如指不自觸，
而心不自見。其事亦如是。

Although mind constitutes from two parts (seeing and being seen, R.S.), it still does not have two (independent, R.S.) marks of distinction. Just like the knife which does not cut itself, like *the finger which does not touch itself*, the fact that mind does not see itself is also like this.

Although one should probably not overestimate the simile of the finger which essentially serves an illustrative purpose, it is still notable that, as we have already seen earlier in this chapter, *Sarvāstivādins* considered touch the privileged sense, as, in their view, it is only through tactile sensation that the substantiality (*tǐ* 體) of the five elements is immediately accessible.²³⁹ In their view, sensible matter as caused by these external elements is the generative cause of sensible perception, while conception as a thought concomitant is only one of the conditions of the arising of object consciousness.²⁴⁰ The finger example thus leads us to the core of *Sarvāstivādin* realism. As this example is clearly coined for tactile sensation, Chinese translations usually render the phrase ‘to touch itself’ as “*zì chù* 自觸”. However, it is highly relevant to our context that the oldest extant version of this passage from the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra* in Chinese, translated by Bodhiruci (d. 527 CE) in 513 CE, differs in precisely this respect. The following is his wording of what we have presented in [32c] in the more recent translation by Śikṣānanda:

[33] *Laṅkāvatārasūtra* (*Rù léngqié jīng* 入楞伽經), tr. Bodhiruci (Pútíliúzhī 菩提流支, d. 527 CE) (T 16, no. 671, p. 578):

應有二種心，而
心無二相。如刀
不自割，指亦不
自指。如心不自
見，其事亦如是。

There must be two minds, but mind has no two distinctive marks. It is like the knife which does not cut itself, *the finger which also does not touch itself*. When it comes to the fact that mind does not see itself, it is also like this.

It is instructive to see that Bodhiruci chooses the word *zhǐ* 指 to render the meaning ‘to touch’. While the reason for this translational decision seems to be

²³⁹ See the respective quotation from *Abhidharmamahāvibhāṣāśāstra* above, note 121, p. 472.

²⁴⁰ Cf. Cox 1988: 61–62.

a moot point, there can be no doubt that the choice is intentional and that the word refers to the realm of the tactile rather than to sight and pointing, as we would expect judging from our previous discussion. While this is also clear from the following example, this choice obviously bears the seed of ambiguity.

The *Śataśāstra* (Bǎilùn 百論, T 1569), attributed to Āryadeva (Típó 提婆), was translated into Chinese by Kumārajīva in 404 CE. It is one of the three *Madhyamaka* treatises at the center of the so-called *sānlùn*-school 三論 which thrived in sixth-century CE China and which developed into the harshest opponent of *Chéngshìlùn* scholarship. When this text elaborates on the example of the fingertip unable to touch itself, it also does so by resorting to the Chinese term *zhǐ* 指:

[34] *Śataśāstra* (Bǎilùn 百論), Āryadeva (Típó 提婆), tr. Kumārajīva (T 30, no. 1569, p. 176):

眼非見相。外曰。如指眼雖見相。不自見眼。如指端不能自觸。如是眼雖見相。不能自見。內曰。不然。觸指業故觸是**指業非指相**。汝言見是眼相者。何不自見眼。是故指喻非也。

The eye is not a distinctive mark of seeing (sight) [i.e. a distinction of seeing]. The outsiders say: Just as a finger, the eye, in spite of seeing distinctive marks, does not see the eye itself. It is just like *the fingertip which is unable to touch itself*. Even if, like this, the eye sees distinctive marks, it is unable to see itself. The insiders say: *It is not like this. Because touching is the activity of the finger. Touching is the activity of the finger and not the distinctive mark of the finger. As you say that seeing is the distinctive mark of the eye, why should it not see the eye itself? Therefore, the simile (example) of the finger is wrong (false).*

It is notable that, in this passage, the *Śataśāstra* explicitly distinguishes between the object a finger touches, that is, a perceptual distinction (*zhǐ xiàng* 指相), and the touching function of the finger, that is, touch as a distinguishing activity (*zhǐ yè* 指業). We thus have here a case of a distinction that is analogous to the contrast between ‘seeing’ (jiàn 見) and ‘seen’ ([suǒ] jiàn 所見) in the above example from the *Śūraṅgamasūtra*, but this time involving the term *zhǐ* 指, even if only in its nominal meaning of ‘finger’. Remarkably, the *Śataśāstra* thus explains nothing less than the very reason why *zhǐ* is not *zhǐ* (指非指)! This is no contradiction, because the superficial identity of the two occurrences of *zhǐ* conceals a fundamental difference between a perceiving distinction and a perceived difference. And even if this observation is not of immediate relevance for the ZWL, it is notable that another of the three influential *Madhyamaka* treatises explains what this has to do with ‘ideation’ (*saṃjñā*) (and conception), that is with two of the aggregates

(*skandhas*) associated not with ‘matter’ (*rūpa*, sè 色) but with ‘naming’ (*míng* 名, *nāma*) – and thus one of the core issues of the *GSLZ* as a whole. The *Dvādaśanikāyaśāstra* (*Shí’èr mén lùn* 十二門論), translated by Kumārajīva in 408 CE, was the second of the *Mādhyamikan* treatises revered by the so-called *sānlùn*-school:

[35] *Dvādaśanikāyaśāstra* (*Shí’èr mén lùn* 十二門論), Nāgārjuna, tr. Kumārajīva, (T 30, no. 1568, p. 164):

如是於可相中少分名相。是故或相即可相。或相異可相。或可相少分爲相。汝言一異不成故。相可相不成者。是事不然。答曰。汝說或相是可相如識等。是事不然。何以故。以相故可知名可相所用者名爲相。凡物不能自知。如指不能自觸。如眼不能自見。是故汝說識即是相可相。是事不然。

Like this, a small part inside something distinguishable is called (its) distinctive mark (distinction). Therefore, some distinctive mark coincides with the distinguishable. Some distinctive mark is different from the distinguishable. A minor part of something distinguishable is (its) distinctive mark. You say that distinction (i.e. distinctive mark) and distinguishable are not established, because neither the oneness nor the difference (of distinction and distinguishable) is established. I hold that in fact it is not like this. Answer: You say that any distinction (distinctive mark) specifies something distinguishable, as in the case of consciousness etc. I hold that in fact it is not like this. Why so? It is because of distinction (its distinctive mark) that the knowable is named distinguishable, and the place on which it applies is called distinction. Every thing is unable to know itself, just as *a finger-tip is unable to touch itself*, as the eye is unable to see itself. Therefore, when you say that consciousness identifies the specification of both distinction (distinctive mark) and distinguishable, I hold that this is in fact not like this.²⁴¹

²⁴¹ “Thus the characterizable is partially identical with characteristics. So characteristics are either the same as, or different from, or partially the same as the characterizable. Your thesis that since sameness and difference cannot be established, characteristics and the characterizable cannot be established, is untenable. Answer: Your thesis that characteristics are the characterizable, just as with consciousness and so forth, is not tenable. Why? Because that which can be known through characteristics is called the characterizable; what has been used in knowing is called characteristics. [But] a thing cannot know itself. For example, a finger

This passage is part of a proof that all things are empty. It starts from a description of the process of distinction as the cognition of so-called distinctive marks or characteristics in distinguishable matter. It suggests that either the distinguishing mark perfectly matches with the distinguished matter, or that it does not neatly correspond to it so that there is no identification between the two. The former suggestion amounts to the claim that distinguishing mark and distinguished matter are identical – so that there can be no combination, because what is identical cannot be combined. The second one implies that distinguishing mark and distinguished matter are different. In this case, there is no identification: What is different remains different so that there can be no genuine combination either. The *Sarvāstivādin* position against self-awareness of cognition is thus invoked here as an argument against the idea of an inherent bipolarity of perception, as suggested by the opponent who considers it as implying the combination of a perceiving sense consciousness with a section of the sensual matter perceived at a particular point in time. If this were true, distinction would involve the conjunction of two different factors, something the *Mādhyamikan* considers impossible. Of course, he does not endorse the opposite position but simply brings the *Sarvāstivādin* view in play to support the first part of his contention: Distinction involves no difference. It holds between items which are the same, so there is merely identity or sameness, and no relation can be established. It is clear that the *Sarvāstivādin* view, according to which consciousness is the cause that has to accompany the combination of the visual sense organ with colored matter in order to raise it to the level of cognition, is equally unacceptable from a *Madhyamaka* perspective, as it also implies the idea of combination.

It is remarkable that this peculiar use of the *Sarvāstivādin* simile of the finger unable to touch itself seems to have prepared the ground for a reinterpretation of the finger as a stock example of something self-identical rather than combined: This can be nicely illustrated in Nāgārjuna's *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*, the third of the *sānlùn* treatises translated by Kumārajīva in 409 CE:

[36a] *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* (Zhōnglùn 中論), Nāgārjuna, comm. *Vimalākṣa 青目, tr. Kumārajīva (T 30, no. 1564, p. 8):

一則無合。何以故。一 If something is one, it is without combination.
 法云何自合。如指端不 Why so? Why should one single element combine
 能自觸。若以異法合, with itself? It is like the finger-tip which is unable
 是亦不可。何以故。以 to touch itself. When it comes to [saying] that

cannot touch itself and an eye cannot see itself. Therefore your thesis that consciousness is both a characteristic and the characterizable is untenable.” (translation in Cheng 1982: 82–83).

異成故。若各成竟不須
復合。雖合猶異。復次
一異俱不可。

different elements combine, this also is not acceptable. Why so? Because the difference is (already) established, and if each (of the differents) is complete it need not further be combined (with something else). Even if combined they amount to be different. Consequently, oneness and difference are both unacceptable.²⁴²

[36b] *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*, p. 19:

是法不自合，異法亦不
合。合者及合時，合法
亦皆無。是法自體不
合，以一故。如一指不
自合。異法亦不合。以
異故。異事已成不須合
故。如是思惟。合法不
可得。是故說合者合時
合法。不可得。

‘This’ same (= self-identical) element (*dharma*) does not combine with itself, ‘different’ elements also do not combine. Hence, the fact of combination, the time of combination and the elements of a combination do not exist. [Comment:] ‘This’ same (= self-identical) element is itself a unit, it is not combined, because it is one. *Just like one finger does not combine with itself.* Different elements also do not combine, because they are different. As different things (phenomena), they are already established (in themselves); they need no combination. If you think about it like this, a combination of elements cannot be attained. For this reason, I say that the fact of combination, the time of combination, and the elements of combination all cannot be attained.²⁴³

Just like the previous excerpt from the *Shí’èr mén lùn* these two passages pertain to the topic of the impossibility of combination both between what is the same and what is different. In its argument, the text interestingly refers to the two crucial terms of classification: *shì* (‘to be [of] this [kind]’) and *yì* (‘to be different’). The wholesale refutation of the idea of combination is thus presented with reference to the names associated with the distinctive marks of things, as raised in the discussion from the *Shí’èr mén lùn* presented above. It is noteworthy that this basic line of argument is in full agreement with the gist of those

²⁴² The passage is part of Vimalākṣa’s commentary.

²⁴³ 14.8: Siderits and Katsura translate from the Sanskrit version of Nāgārjuna’s verses: “It is not correct to say that conjunction is of this with itself, nor that there is the conjunction of this with another. The presently being conjoined, the conjoined, and that which conjoins – none of these exists.” Vimalākṣa’s commentary is missing. (Siderits/Katsura trans. 2013: 151).

parts of the *GSLZ*, such as BML, which argue for the integrity of names like ‘horse’ or ‘white’ and which refute their ‘combination’ into phrases like ‘white horse’. Strikingly, it is precisely in discussions about the inconceivability of both sameness and difference in terms of combinability, that the very notion of *zhǐ* 指 is raised in the *sānlùn* texts under consideration here. And while this co-occurrence is obviously a weak basis for farther-reaching conclusions, it is noticeable that the unity of finger and object in touch – and its simultaneous distinctness from tactile consciousness – would thus have been chosen as a general illustration of the integrity of units which cannot be combined from smaller constituent parts. While these *Mādhyamika*n discussions show a certain resemblance to the final discussion of JBL about sight, touch and self-awareness, an assessment of their possible implications for the highly opaque ZWL must await further enquiry. What is noticeable is that, just like the *Chéngshílùn*, the three texts from the *Madhyamaka* tradition discussed above were translated by Kumārajīva at the beginning of the fifth century. We have already seen that JBL most probably reflects discussions in the *Chéngshílùn*: In view of this, its additional similarities to the *sānlùn* treatises just discussed seem to support the idea that it might indeed have been composed in the larger context of the debate between early Chinese *Mādhyamika*ns and partisans of the *Chéngshílùn*. More detailed investigations will be necessary in order to clarify whether the implicit references in JBL (and other parts of the *GSLZ*) to Buddhist discussions even allow for a clearer positioning of this chapter (and the entire collection) in this internal conflict in medieval Buddhism. However, regardless of the precise nature of the conspicuous similarities of (parts of) the *GSLZ* with Buddhist texts, it is striking that the topic of *zhǐ* has led us to yet another dimension of possible Buddhist traces in the *GSLZ*.

On the whole, it thus seems that what appears to be an arbitrary choice on the part of early translators to render the notion of ‘touch’ in Buddhist writings about perception with the Chinese term *zhǐ* prepared the ground for the prominent appearance of this term in subsequent discussions about self-awareness. And while the rather detailed analyses presented in the *Madhyamaka* treatises discussed above clearly refer to the notion of touch and the finger as an organ of tactile sensation, it was possibly due to the prominence of the term in other contexts, such as the finger-moon and the horse-finger metaphors, that the focus of the discussion about *zhǐ* subsequently shifted toward the notion of ‘pointing’ and eventually gave rise to the kinds of dialogues about pointing and consciousness exemplified by the dialogue from the *Śūraṅgamasūtra* quoted above.

Thus Buddhist discourses from the early fifth century CE onward provided the term *zhǐ* with rich philosophical connotations, ranging from questions of language to the problem of cognition and self-awareness. Whoever may have

been responsible for the medieval compilation of the extant ZWL, it is clear that (t)he(y) could play on a vast variety of possible philosophical allusions of the term. Furthermore, as we have seen, Buddhist reflections on the nature of sensual perception would even have offered them a ready-made analysis of the apparently contradictory claim that “*zhǐ* is not *zhǐ*”, which they chose to integrate so prominently at the very beginning of their piece.

While it is clear that the parallels between ZWL and several Buddhist and non-Buddhist sources dating from the fifth through eighth centuries CE do not allow for any specific conclusions regarding its composition, it can thus be demonstrated that an intellectual climate in which the term *zhǐ* was used in discussions about the relationship between perception, designation, and conceptualization prevailed during that period. This interpretation of the term is not only much more specific than its common usage in Buddhist contexts in the sense of ‘linguistic symbol’ or ‘sign’; it is also much closer to its apparent use in ZWL. Again, I should stress that my suspicion that ZWL might have undergone editorial modifications as late as the period of the Northern and Southern dynasties or even the Táng dynasty has been reached independently of any assumptions about intellectual parallels to allegedly contemporaneous Buddhist or Daoist texts. Yet once we look for possible sources of inspiration that might have encouraged the medieval compiler(s) to modify the text in the way (t)he(y) apparently did, not only the *Zhuāngzǐ*, but also Buddhist texts provide highly plausible points of reference. It thus seems clear that a purported seventh-century CE compiler of the extant *GSLZ* who integrated ZWL into his collection would have lived in an intellectual milieu in which the problem of pointing and its relevance for potentially detrimental conceptual distinctions was common currency.

6.3 The Pivotal Notion of 兼: Enmeshed in A Net of Buddhist-Daoist Allusions?

To conclude the present section, we now shift our attention to the crucial term *jiān* 兼, which explicitly connects JBL with ZWL, and which I argued originated in a miswriting of 無. *Jiān* is used in the JBL to refer to the mind’s conceptual ‘combination’ or ‘synthesis’ of various perceived qualities into a single object. What it connects are (at least) two heterogeneous items: On the one hand, there are the qualities which – unless hidden – are laid bare to the senses. They circumscribe and isolate certain areas by contrasting them with their respective backgrounds (i.e. they are what metaphysicians call ‘tropes’). On the other hand, there are the ‘shapes’ or ‘forms’ which the mind adjusts or matches to the patterns presented by the senses. The result is the construction of a thing through the conjunction of one

or several sensual qualities with an intellectual form, which yields the kind of concrete objects which JBL exemplifies in the “hard white stone”. It is easy to see that the process constituting the object in the mind, as presented in JBL – in spite of its use of the (equivocal) term ‘thing’ rather than ‘shape’ – on the one hand represents what BML calls ‘color’ and ‘shape’, and on the other is reminiscent of the opposition encountered in the Buddhist *Chéngshìlùn* between *rūpa* (*sè*), the sensual basis of distinction, and the intellectual objects, such as the concept of a jar or a cart, which the mind abstracts on this basis.

For the next step in our argument, it is important to consider another level of intertextual references at play in JBL. As we have seen, Graham has already argued that the following passage is construed on the basis of two sections in ZWL and BML, respectively (cf. [27] above):

[37a] JBL (DZ/1172/3/2v[16v]/5–6):

曰：「物白焉，不定其所白。物堅焉，不定其所堅。不定者兼，惡乎甚（=其）石也？」

A: “Now, as for a thing, what is white in it does not determine the [nature of] what it makes white. Just as what is hard in a thing does not determine the [nature of] what it makes hard. Now, if two undetermined entities are combined, how could it be that they are a stone?”

[37b] ZWL (DZ/1172/2/2r[10r]/5–6):

且指者天下之所兼。天下無指者，物不可謂無指也。

Now, as for pointers, they are what the world combines. That the world has no pointers does not allow for saying that things have no pointers.

[37c] BML (DZ/1172/1/7r/9–7v/2):

曰：「白者不定 所白，忘之而可也。白馬者，言白定所白也。定所白者，非白也。」

A: “In ‘white’ one does not determine what it makes white. It is admissible to forget about it. Saying white in [the expression] ‘white horse’ determines what it makes white. That which determines what is made white is not the white.

As we have argued above, the character 兼 in ZWL [37b] is a corruption of 無, unnoticed or disregarded by the compiler of the JBL parallel [37a]. Now we are in a position to understand the implications of [37a]: the ‘combination’ or ‘synthesis’ which yields the concrete palpable ‘things’ is effected by the mind. ‘Mind’ is also the faculty which is able to contribute the concepts of ‘form’ or ‘thing’ to which the

notion of a stone belongs. However, taking together two heterogeneous but equally sensual qualities such as ‘hard’ and ‘white’ fails to specify the kind of thing of which they are attributes. There seems to be a certain conflict here with what [37b] says: here the ‘world’ occurs in the subject position of *jiān*, so that it appears as if it were the world rather than the faculty of the mind which effectuates the ‘combination’ of ‘markers’ or ‘pointers’ with ‘thing concepts’ to yield the appearance of perceptible things. Note, however, that this is possibly a projection favored by the English translation: in Chinese, the noun *tiānxià* in the subject position can unproblematically refer to the location rather than the agent of a following existential verb. Thus it might possibly be more accurate to render the first sentence of [37b] as follows: “as for pointers, they are the places in the world that are combined”, which would leave open the question of the cause of these combinations.

However, in spite of their far-reaching implications, these interpretational details seem to be of limited relevance to our case. What is far more important is the following observation: if [37a] is not only modeled after [37b], but equally imitates the BML passage in [37c], we can be certain that its composer was well aware of the word immediately following the phrase 所白 in BML, namely the verb *wàng* 忘 (‘to forget/to disregard’). This suggests that the peculiar way in which the formulation of [37a] collates excerpts of passages from both ZWL and BML was chosen to invoke the collocation of *jiān* 兼 and *wàng* 忘. The phrase *jiān wàng* 兼忘 alludes to the ‘*Tiānyùn*’ 天運 (Revolution of Heaven) chapter of the *Zhuāngzǐ*, in which it captures the culmination of a development of progressive emancipation from other people and things: starting with the refutation of a privileged emotional relationship with one’s parents, the process is eventually accomplished by disengaging from the entire world.²⁴⁴ Since the fourth century CE, this phrase came to be adopted in Buddhist contexts as a metaphor for the simultaneous refutation of two opposites, and hence of non-duality. The first example I am aware of is Dào’ān’s 道安 (312–385) preface to his commentary on the *Ānbān shǒuyì jīng* 安般守意經 (**Ānāpānasamṛtisūtra*), a classic work on respiratory techniques in meditation (*ānāpāna*, *ānbān* 安般),²⁴⁵ in which he

244 “[When] venerating one’s parents by means of respect is easy, venerating them with love is difficult; [when] venerating one’s parents with love is easy, forgetting one’s relatives is difficult. [When] forgetting one’s relatives is easy, having one’s relatives forget oneself is difficult. [When] having one’s relatives forget oneself is easy, entirely forgetting the world is difficult. [While] entirely forgetting the world is easy, having the world entirely forget oneself is difficult” (以敬孝易，以愛孝難；以愛孝易，以忘親難；忘親易，使親忘我難；使親忘我易，兼忘天下難；兼忘天下易，使天下兼忘我難。); *Zhuāngzǐ*, ‘*Tiānyùn*’ 天運 2, in Guō 1978: 498–499.

245 Zacchetti 2010: 421–422.

characterizes the stage of *nirvāṇa* (literally something like ‘non-engagement’ or ‘disengagement’ [wú wéi 無爲]) in Zhuāngzǐ’s words as the level on which one succeeds in “having the world forget one’s self”. This refers to a stage where “self and other are both destroyed” (彼我雙廢).²⁴⁶ His disciple Sēngruì 僧睿 (371–438) writes about “forgetting both the trap of [linguistic] distinction and the self” (筌我兼忘) as an approximation of reality (*shí* 實) in which the difference between *nirvāṇa* and *samsāra* (èr jì 二際) is overcome.²⁴⁷ Richard Mather has observed the crucial role of the idea of 兼忘 – which he translates as “total forgetting” – in the work of the eminent poet, scholar–historian, and lay Buddhist Shěn Yuē 沈約 (441–513), who considers it a method by which to achieve “all-encompassing illumination” (*jiān zhào* 兼照).²⁴⁸ Mather stresses the popularity of the *Chéngshílùn* during Shěn’s lifetime. In his words, it opposed the “extreme nihilism” of the *Madhyamaka*, holding that, at one level, all *dharma*s are indeed real and need to be reduced to emptiness via repeated efforts to analyze and eventually dispel them.²⁴⁹ It should be noted, however, that prior to Jízàng 吉藏 (549–623), even Buddhist clerics usually felt no contradiction between engaging in *Chéngshílùn* exegesis and the concomitant study of *Madhyamaka* texts – possibly, as Krause suggests, due to the former text’s strong anti-Sarvāstivādic bent. Regardless of these inner-Buddhist tensions, the *jiān wàng* phrase from the Zhuāngzǐ eventually ended up as a cipher for the dictum of non-duality²⁵⁰ – as in expressions such as *yǒu wú jiān wàng* 有無兼忘 (“concurrent forgetting of both being there and not being there”)²⁵¹ or *kōng yǒu jiān wàng* 空有兼忘 (“concurrent forgetting of both emptiness and being there”).²⁵²

246 *Chū sānzàng jì jí* 出三藏記集, T 55, no. 145, fasc. 6, p. 43.

247 See the preface to the *Dvādaśanikāyaśāstra* (*Shí’èr mén lùn* 十二門論), preserved and attributed to Sēngruì in *Chū sānzàng jì jí* 出三藏記集 (11: 77) and contained in *Shí’èr mén lùn* (T 30, no. 1568, p. 159) and *Shí’èr mén lùn shū* 十二門論疏 (T 42, no. 1825, fasc. 1, p. 173).

248 Mather 1988: 150–151.

249 Mather 1988: 136.

250 For an excellent discussion of this kind of Daoist-Buddhist “metaphor-blending”, see Plassen 2015.

251 *Chūsānzàngjì jí*, T 45, no. 2145, fasc. 55, p. 48.

252 *Guāng Hóngmíngjí* 廣宏明集, T 52, no. 2103, fasc. 52, p. 206.

Given the prominence of this phrase at least since the fifth century CE, it thus seems highly probable that an educated compiler who came across our purported ZWL fragment – which, like the original passage from the ‘Tiānyùn’ chapter, contained the salient character 兼, and which also featured prominent occurrences of the term ‘*tiānxià*’ – would be likely to maintain the arguably miswritten character 兼. And we would moreover surmise that it would have been attractive for him to do what he apparently did in phrasing the passage from JBL quoted above – namely, to relate the passage to BML and its admission of ‘forgetting’, under certain circumstances, the kind of object highlighted by the color white. Finally, let us note that the notion of *jiān*, as developed in the *GSLZ*, refers to the mental co-ordination of intellectual entities such as forms or shapes and sensual qualities such as colors. These belong to what the *Chéngshílùn* (just like previous *Sarvāstivāda* treatises) attributes to two heterogeneous domains – the sensual basis that makes up the matter of distinctions on the one hand, and the mental constructions and corresponding nominal designations superimposed on sensual perceptions on the other. At the same time, the *Chéngshílùn* considers that both of these domains equally need to be overcome. Assuming that the *GSLZ* is indeed a medieval compilation, the co-ordinated “perception-cum-conception” which it develops could thus be a reflection, if not an *intentional* inversion, of the concerted efforts of some contemporaneous Buddhist currents to eventually eclipse both conception and perception alike. Not least given its implicit allusions to both *Sarvāstivādin* and *Mādhyamikan* sources, we may even speculate that the *GSLZ* – or at least parts of it – reflects a tacit refutation of the program of the prospective dissolution of all distinctions propagated in the *Chéngshílùn*.

Even if our investigations into possible Buddhist traces in the vocabulary of JBL, ZWL, and BML have to remain both tentative and speculative, we have been able to depict the lines along which a medieval compiler might have integrated two previously independent texts – BML and ZWL – into a new collection arranged around the newly composed JBL. Although the assumption that their editorial decisions were substantially informed by a palpable Buddhist background ultimately cannot be proven, it seems to me that my observations at least provide *plausible* explanations for a number of editorial decisions to assemble, modify, and compose the fragmentary constituent texts of the received *GSLZ* collection precisely in the way it has been preserved and handed down to us.

7 Buddhist Inspiration? A Possible History of the *GSLZ*'s Composition

In this section, I present a discussion of Shěn's suggestion that ZWL was integrated into the *GSLZ* or its alleged predecessor, the *Discourse on Preserving White*, only in the second half of the seventh century CE. Based on Shěn's additional assumption that JBL was already part of the *Shǒubáilùn*, it is clear that the accuracy of this assumption would exclude the constitutive role ZWL played in the arrangement of JBL (as suggested above), as the latter would have circulated independently of the former. However, if Shěn is right in another respect – namely, in his assumption that BML and ZWL indeed circulated independently of a *Discourse on Preserving White*, which allegedly only consisted of the “neo-Mohist” chapters of the *GSLZ* up to the early decades of the Táng period – this state of affairs may point toward another clue as to its history of composition. But as I consider the interdependence of JBL and ZWL evident, Shěn's hypothesis seems plausible only if it is adjusted in one crucial respect: because JBL is highly unlikely to have been composed independently of ZWL, its compilation can hardly predate the inclusion of ZWL in the *GSLZ* or any of its predecessors. Therefore, if Shěn is right, then JBL itself – at least in its received form – could not have been compiled any earlier than in the first half of the seventh century CE.²⁵³

Let us develop our argument step by step. As we have seen, the book title *Gōngsūn Lóngzǐ* is first attested in the bibliographical list transmitted in the *Hànshū* (History of the Former Hàn), which stretches back to materials compiled around the beginning of the common era, some 250 years after the presumed lifetime of the debater, and resurfaces again only in the early seventh century CE. Even though in the last century BCE, Sīmǎ Qiān's 司馬遷 (145–86 BCE) *Shǐjì* 史記 (Records of the Grand Scribe) states that there were numerous writings by Gōngsūn Lóng extant, the “Grand Scribe” does not provide the titles of any of these works.²⁵⁴ Except for the roughly contemporaneous *Hànshū*, with its isolated mention of a *Gōngsūn Lóngzǐ*, the eastern Hàn scholars Huán Tán 桓譚 (23–56 CE) and Wáng Chōng 王充 (27–97 CE) specify for the first time the

²⁵³ In fact, as Graham has shown, its first mention (by the Buddhist monk Fǎlín in 621 CE) occurs in precisely this period; see Graham 1956/7: 179.

²⁵⁴ See *Shǐjì*, ‘Mèngzǐ Xún Qīng lièzhuàn’ 孟子荀卿列傳 12, in Sīmǎ 1973: 2349. The text mentions the debater's ‘disputations’ (*biàn* 辯) about “hard and white” (*jiān bái* 堅白) as well as “sameness and difference” (*tóng yì* 同異), thus apparently referring to two topics discussed in Gōngsūn Lóng's writing rather than their titles.

title of a work allegedly authored by Gōngsūn Lóng in the early written record. Both attribute a *Discourse on Hard and White* (*Jiānbái zhī lùn* 堅白之論) to the “sophist”.²⁵⁵ However, while Wáng remains entirely silent about the theories of this text, the short excerpt from Huán’s *Xīnlùn* 新論 (New Discourses) – which is only attested in a tenth-century CE encyclopedia harkening back to the sixth century CE – associates the work with the “white horse” argument. As has been observed by Graham and others, this equation of the *topoi* of “hard and white” and “white and horse” is common only since the later Hàn period.²⁵⁶ However, records about a *lùn* 論 (‘argument’ or ‘treatise’) on “white and horse” do not appear before the medieval period. Moreover, while it is not clear whether the fourth-century CE occurrence in *Shìshuō Xīnyǔ* refers to a text – rather than an *argument* – about this topic,²⁵⁷ the late fourth-century CE commentator on the *Lièzǐ*, Zhāng Zhàn, not only quotes from the ‘Discourse on White and Horse’, but in fact remarks that a text under this title was extant and widely discussed during his lifetime.²⁵⁸ While a text entitled BML and attributed to Gōngsūn Lóng is thus attested as early as the late fourth century CE, the first source to identify him as the author of a ‘Discourse on Hard and White’ under the same title as the received chapter – ‘*Jiānbái lùn*’ rather than ‘*Jiānbái zhī lùn*’ – appears to be the apologetic *Pòxié lùn* 破邪論 (Discourse on the Rebuttal of Distorted [Teachings]) by the Buddhist scholar Fǎlín 法琳 (572–640) at the turn from the sixth to the seventh century CE.²⁵⁹

Graham somewhat enthusiastically inferred from this record of medieval and early Táng references that there is unambiguous evidence for the existence of a

255 Wáng Chōng mentions the work in his *Lùnhéng*, ‘Ānshū’ 案書 3, in Huáng 1964: 1159. The *Xīnlùn* fragment is transmitted in the *Tàipíng Yùlǎn* 太平御覽 (compl. 983, based on a medieval compilation from 572), fasc. 464, in Lǐ 1960: 2134. Cf. Graham 1956/7: 175; Graham 1967: 366.

256 Graham 1956/7: 175. See also Hé 1967: 178.

257 *Shìshuō Xīnyǔ*, ‘Wénxuè’ 24 (in Xú 1989: 117) is a fifth-century CE work traditionally attributed to Liú Yìqīng 劉義慶 (403–444 CE); but see the discussion in Mather (1976: xii), who suggests that it came under Hé Chángyú’s 何長瑜, d. 446 CE) editorship. Shěn Yǒudǐng assumes that the incident recorded in the medieval collection refers to a discussion about the *topic* of the white horse rather than a text by this name. He even speculates that the very essay which the Eastern Jin (317–420 CE) scholar Ruǎn Yù 阮裕 is said to have composed in order to explain this *dictum* is in fact the extant BML (see Shěn 1992a: 488–489, 490; Shěn 1992c [1989]: 445). Graham, in contrast, takes the reference as evidence for the existence of a BML which he identifies with the received chapter of the *GSLZ* (see Graham 1956/7: 176).

258 Graham 1956/7: 176. Shěn assumes that the BML Zhāng Zhàn is referring to was actually a medieval composition, speculating that it might even have been the text on the ‘white horse’ *topos* composed, according to the *Shìshuō Xīnyǔ*, by the Eastern Jin erudite Ruǎn Yù; see Shěn 1992c (1989): 445–446.

259 T 52, no. 2109, p. 4. Cf. n. 253, p. 532 above.

BML since Hàn times.²⁶⁰ At the same time, there are no hints suggesting the existence of a text corresponding or even similar to the received JBL chapter of the *GSLZ* prior the early seventh century CE. In spite of the Hàn records of a ‘Discourse *about* Hard and White’ attributed to Gōngsūn Lóng, as mentioned above, this conspicuous absence of explicit references to JBL in later medieval records eventually led Graham to conclude that this chapter must have been compiled only later.²⁶¹ Together with the observation of early Táng taboos in the introductory ‘Jìfǔ’ chapter,²⁶² he took this as evidence that the *GSLZ*, as we know it, was only compiled as late as the seventh century CE.²⁶³ Graham also subscribes to the thesis that an early version of the *GSLZ* had circulated under the title *Shǒubáilùn* 守白論 (Discourse on Preserving White) in the early seventh century.²⁶⁴ Shěn Yǒudǐng, who considers the entire *GSLZ* (with the exception of the first third of TBL²⁶⁵) a medieval composition, not only concurs with Graham’s assumption regarding its date of compilation,²⁶⁶ but he also identifies the *Shǒubáilùn* as an early version of this text.²⁶⁷ However, while Graham remains silent about the exact time and context of the composition of the Mohist-inspired “forged” chapters (JBL, TBL, and MSL), Shěn considers all the texts, as collected in the extant *GSLZ*, to be products of the Jìn dynasty (265–420 CE).²⁶⁸ Like Graham, he thus assumes that they already existed *before* the received *GSLZ* was compiled. Basing his argument on what the sources say about the *Shǒubáilùn*, he presents a rather detailed account of the alleged process of its compilation; his hypothesis revolves around the *Zhuāngzǐ* sub-commentary by the Daoist scholar Chéng Xuányīng 成玄英 (fl. 631 CE). Shěn observes that Chéng attributes two different texts to Gōngsūn Lóng. While in most cases he writes about the debater’s *Shǒubáilùn*, he once attributes to him the composition of a BML. Based on this,

260 Graham 1956/7: 175. “It would be unreasonable to doubt that the Essay on the White Horse existed in substantially its present form at least as early as in the 1st c. AD.”

261 Graham 1956/7: 177.

262 Graham 1956/7: 172–173

263 Graham 1956/7: 181–183.

264 Although he admits that the scarce evidence renders futile any attempt to ascertain which parts – the Mohist-influenced chapters or the “authentic ones” – of the extant *GSLZ* were already contained in the *Shǒubáilùn* collection; see Graham 1956/7: 169.

265 Shěn 1992a: 507. In this respect, he agrees with Graham (see Graham 1951: 150–152). Shěn admits that BML, in spite of being a medieval compilation, has preserved some of the alleged argumentative strictness characteristic of the texts of ancient debaters (see Shěn 1992: 509).

266 Shěn 1992a: 502.

267 Shěn 1992a: 505.

268 Shěn 1992c (1989): 444.

Shěn draws the conclusion that these two texts were still circulating independently of each other in the early seventh century CE.²⁶⁹

Shěn then adds an argument *ex silentio*: as we have already mentioned, the *Zhuāngzǐ* is the only pre-imperial text to contain a few passages that are similar to ZWL. At least one of these – the expression “*zhǐ zhī fēi zhǐ*” 指之非指 in ‘Qíwù lùn’, discussed above – was indeed interpreted as a reference to the *GSLZ*, though not before the eleventh century CE. In view of this, Shěn considers it remarkable that Chéng’s sub-commentary, in spite of referring to Gōngsūn Lóng on several occasions, mentions no ZWL at all.²⁷⁰ Based on this conspicuous lack of references to one of the core pieces of the received *GSLZ*, Shěn concludes that ZWL was not yet included in the version of the *Shǒubáilùn* which Chéng had to hand.²⁷¹

Taking his two hypotheses together, this alleged immediate predecessor of the *GSLZ* – which, according to Shěn, was compiled during the Jin period – would have contained neither BML nor ZWL, but only what Graham called the “spurious” chapters. Only a few sources mention a text by the name of *Shǒubáilùn*, and even fewer associate it with the name of Gōngsūn Lóng. Except for Chéng’s *Zhuāngzǐ* sub-commentary, only a passage in the introductory JF chapter of the *GSLZ* itself mentions the debater as its author. The notorious entry of a text under this title in the bibliographical section of the *Suǐshū* does not attribute the work to Gōngsūn Lóng. None of these sources predates the seventh century CE. Another source which makes ample use of the expression “*shǒu bái*” 守白, but which has been largely ignored in the research, is the so-called *Old Commentary* (舊注) on the *GSLZ*. This was probably ignored because it was assumed to be a Táng or even a Sòng dynasty work. It is interesting, as it seems to be pieced together from (at least) two different commentaries – one developing a political interpretation of the text, and the other much more interested in logical and epistemological problems.²⁷² Strikingly, the crucial expression “preserving white” (*shǒu bái* 守白) occurs exclusively in the commentaries on BML and on the introductory JF chapter, but nowhere else in the work. The phrase is associated with a peculiar

269 Shěn 1992a: 494.

270 Chéng’s sub-commentary on the famous passage from ‘Qíwù lùn’ takes *zhǐ* in the concrete sense of ‘finger’. The second term, *mǎ* (lit. ‘horse’), is identified as a ‘game chip’ (*xìchóu* 戲籌) (see Guō 1978: vol. 1: 69). In some contrast to this, his commentary on the occurrence of the term *zhǐ* in the ‘Tiānxià’ chapter seems more closely related to the topic of ‘pointing’. It reads: “Now, with a finger, you point at a thing, but not at a finger (?). Therefore, the finger does not reach (what it points at). But it is from the finger that you grasp the thing. This is why it (= the thing) is not detached (from the finger) even after you have reached it” (夫以指指物而非指。故指不至也，而自指得物。故至不絕者也。); Guō 1978: 4: 1110.

271 Shěn 1992a: 502.

272 Kandel 1974: 139.

interpretation of the white horse argument as an admonition against nepotism and ethnocentrism. This part of the commentary demonstrates close resemblances to the pre-Táng *Yīn Wénzǐ* 尹文子,²⁷³ in terms of both *philosophical concerns*²⁷⁴ and *phrasing*.²⁷⁵ If these similarities²⁷⁶ are indeed indicative of a common context of composition, this would imply that this part of the commentary is considerably older than the rest. Thus it would seem possible that it might have been attached to a precursor of the extant BML, which possibly circulated independently of the remaining chapters of the extant *GSLZ*.²⁷⁷ If true, this would demonstrate an intimate connection between the expression “preserving white” and the “white horse” argument – a connection which, incidentally, seems to speak against Shěn’s view that the designations *Shǒubáilùn* and *Báimǎlùn* referred to different texts.²⁷⁸ The passage in JF also unmistakably shows that the expression “*shǒubái*” 守白 is a variation on the much more frequent (and older) “*jiānbái*” 堅白 (“hard and white”),²⁷⁹ an expression which, as we have seen, had been associated with the white horse argument since the middle period of the Hàn dynasty. While it is thus unclear in what form the various texts gathered in the extant *GSLZ* were circulating before they

273 The literary catalogue of the *Suǐshū* lists a work by this name in two chapter sections (see Chángsūn 1955: 76). It thus seems to have been extant before the Táng period.

274 Most notably, this includes a discourse on the status of kinship in ‘favoring’ (*qīn* 親) and ‘dismissing’ (*shū* 疏/疎/疎) candidates for appointments to administrative posts. Cf. *Yīn Wénzǐ*, ‘Dàdào shàng’ (hereafter DDS) 10, 30, in Qián 1996: 2, 5; *Yīn Wénzǐ*, ‘Dàdào xià’ (hereafter DDX) 17, in Qián 1996: 8, vs. *GSLZ Jiùzhù* (hereafter JZ), BML [DZ/1172/1/5r/5; 5r/10; 5v/4–5; 6r/2, 6; 7r/10–7v/1; 7v/9–8r/3]. In the *GSLZ* commentary, 親 occurs only once outside of BML!

275 Examples include the opposition between the ‘correspondence’ (*yīng* 應) and the ‘divergence’ (*guāi* 乖) of name and reality (cf. YWZ, DDS 8, in Qián 1996: 2; DDX 1, in Qián 1996: 8, vs. *GSLZ JZ*, TBL [DZ/1172/2/14r/9–14v/3]), the use of ‘name’ 名 and ‘implement’ 器 for office title and office holder (cf. YWZ, DDS 1, in Qián 1996: 1, vs. *GSLZ JZ*, JF [DZ/1172/1/1r/5], MSL [DZ/1172/3/20v/1]), the use of *lián* 連 as a technical term for connecting names (cf. YWZ, DDS 11, in Qián 1996: 2, vs. *GSLZ JZ*, BML [DZ/1172/1/5r/9; 7r/8]). Additionally, there is an almost *verbatim* parallel in the definition of the relation between name and reality: “A name names a shape/reality; a shape/reality corresponds to a name” (名者名形者也, 形者應名者也), in YWZ, DDS 8, in Qián 1996: 2, vs. 名者命實者也, 實者應名者也 in *GSLZ JZ*, TBL (DZ/1172/2/6r[14r]/9).

276 However, there are systematic differences, e.g. when the *GSLZ* commentary consistently writes 實 where YWZ has 形. Obviously, a closer investigation is needed to elucidate the precise relationship between these two texts.

277 Note that the parallels to the YWZ in the *GSLZ JZ* in chapters other than JF and BML occur in the generalizations at the end which are only loosely tied to the specific content of the chapters which they conclude.

278 Shěn 1992a: 494.

279 This is evident from the parallel passage in the *Xīnlùn* by the Western Hàn scholar Huán Tán, preserved in the *Tàipíng Yùlǎn* 太平御覽; see Graham 1956/7: 175.

found their way into the collection, it is well possible that they were transmitted independently of each other, perhaps well into the seventh century CE.

To develop our argument further, a short excursion seems appropriate at this point. Interestingly, neither Shěn nor Graham – nor any of the studies known to me – have identified what seems to be the most ancient quotation of the *GSLZ*, which mentions the title and also provides a passage that can be unmistakably identified in the received version of the text:

[38] *Sēng Zhào shū* 僧肇疏 (Sub-commentary on the works of Sēng Zhào, T 45, no. 1859, p. 116):

公孫龍子名實論云：天與地，其
所產焉，物也。 The ‘Discourse on Name and Substance’ in
the *Gōngsūn Lóngzǐ* (or by master Gōngsūn
Lóng) says: “Heaven combines with earth.
Whatever they produce in it (= this combination/themselves?) is a thing.”

This quotation of the initial line of MSL is taken from the sub-commentary to Sēng Zhào’s 僧肇 (374–414) ‘Wù bù qiān lùn’ 物不遷論 (Discourse on Things Not Moving), written by the Buddhist *Mādhyamikan* and *sānlùn* scholar–monk Yuánkāng 元康, who was active during the Zhēnguān period (627–649 CE). Yuánkāng’s commentary, composed sometime in the first half of the seventh century CE, shows that a text associated with Master Gōngsūn Lóng was so well-established that a Buddhist monk relied on it to define a key concept in the revered text he set out to interpret. Due to the fact that the passage he quotes under the title “Míngshí lùn” can be identified, with some degree of confidence, with the opening line of the homonymous chapter of the extant *GSLZ*, it thus seems almost certain that the expression “Gōngsūn Lóngzǐ” here not only refers to the name of the debater, but to his text. While the references to the *Jiānbáilùn* and *Shǒubáilùn* discussed above, which are probably slightly older, seem too elusive to draw any definite conclusions as to their relationship with the extant *GSLZ*, we can thus be rather confident that a text by the name of *GSLZ* existed around the mid-seventh century, and that it contained a passage identifiable with an – almost – *verbatim* parallel in our extant collection. This suggests that a text by this name featuring at least some of the chapters of the received text was already established and widely known.

In spite of this fortuitous citation, we nevertheless have to admit that this single line is possibly too short to allow for more far-reaching conclusions. Still, what is remarkable here is the fact that what appears to be the oldest quotation from the *GSLZ* is not only found in a Buddhist commentary, but that the Buddhist text commented upon is none other than the *Zhàolùn*, a collection of

essays which we have already come across earlier in our study, and which is possibly of particular relevance to the *GSLZ*. As shown in section five of the present paper, the MSL quoted by Yuánkāng is one of the chapters that appear to consist of two very heterogeneous and not explicitly related parts – the first one probably ancient, the second one obviously written on the model of the Mohist ‘Canons’. We have suggested that the *Madhyamaka* discourse claiming the relativity of all designations might present the “missing link” that joins these two unconnected parts dealing with ‘names’ and ‘reality’ and the relative demonstratives ‘this’ and ‘that’, respectively. Moreover, we have specifically noted that Sēng Zhào’s ‘Discourse on Not Taking Emptiness as Real’ in fact advances in precisely the same way – from the relation between name and reality to the relativity of the prototypical correlatives ‘this’ and ‘that’ – in an obvious attempt to turn the notion of a universal relativity of names into a “weapon” against assumptions about their substantial meaning. We therefore suggested that the compiler of MSL might have been aware of Buddhist debates about language and possibly even of specific texts, such as Sēng Zhào’s treatise.

The following additional observation is interesting in our present context: regarding our discussion of a plausible rationale informing the possible inclusion of ZWL in the *GSLZ*, it seems intriguing that, a few lines after discarding the idea of a substantial meaning of names via the universal claim that all names are correlative in nature, Sēng Zhào justifies *Madhyamaka* scholars’ use of what modern readers identify as contradictory assertions with an explicit reference to the *Zhūāngzǐ*’s “profound and far-reaching words” (*shēn yuǎn zhī yán* 深遠之言) about the similes of ‘finger’ and ‘horse’ (*zhǐ mǎ zhī kuàng* 指馬之況).²⁸⁰ This is relevant to our case for two reasons: First, here Sēng Zhào unambiguously refers to the precedent of the *Zhūāngzǐ* – or, more precisely, to ‘Qíwù lùn’ – rather than to Gōngsūn Lóng and his ‘Zhǐwù lùn’, although the latter would have provided a contradictory statement in its very first sentence. Second, his text, composed at the turn of the fourth to the fifth century CE, obviously wants his readers to understand the contraction “finger and horse” as a cipher for the *Zhūāngzǐ* and its thought in general, as the allusion to the Qīyuán 漆園 garden, *Zhūāngzǐ*’s alleged place of employment, clearly suggests.²⁸¹ This is significant, especially when contrasted with the *Nǐ Gōngsūn Lóngzǐ lùn* mentioned above. The author of this latter text, who lived some 250 years after Sēng Zhào, reports that it was when their discussion touched upon precisely this topic of “finger and horse” that his host

²⁸⁰ *Zhàolùn shū* T 1859: 174a10.

²⁸¹ According to his biography in the *Shiji*, *Zhūāngzǐ* was in charge of the Qīyuán garden. Cf. ‘Lǎozǐ, Hán Fēi lièzhuàn’ 9, in Simǎ 1973: 2143.

presented him his copy of the *GSLZ*. Without overestimating the weight of this isolated account, we can thus still observe that what Sēng Zhào doubtlessly intended as a more or less transparent allusion to the *Zhuāngzǐ* became associated not with the gardener of the Qīyuán grove, but with Gōngsūn Lóng and his work. ‘Zhǐ’ and ‘mǎ’ are no longer related to ‘Qíwù lùn’, but are taken as acronyms of the most prominent chapters in the *GSLZ*: ZWL and BML.

Instead of simply suggesting, on a very general level, a fundamental change in the tacit interpretation which listeners in the mid-seventh century would have associated with the phrase *zhǐ mǎ*, which combines the terms for finger and horse, these observations may be relevant for the compilation of the *GSLZ* in a more specific way. As we have already seen, there is a salient structural resemblance between MSL and Sēng Zhào’s text, in that both conclude their discussion of the relationship between names and reality with a section on the correlative terms ‘this’ and ‘that’. While this sequence of topics appears as nothing more than an accidental collocation in MSL, it marks a necessary step in the context of Sēng Zhào’s argument. It seems uncontroversial to me that this points toward an imitation of Buddhist precedents – regardless of whether this is intentional or not. Moreover, it does not seem implausible, especially in view of the prominence of Sēng Zhào’s work as early as the sixth and seventh centuries, to assume more specifically that it was indeed this ‘Discourse on Not Taking Emptiness as Real’ which inspired the modification and amendment of an older version of MSL. If we further assume that the inclusion of ZWL – and possibly also of BML – in the *GSLZ* or its predecessor occurred at a later point in time than that of MSL, then the fact that the reference to *Zhuāngzǐ*’s ‘finger’ and ‘horse’ in this particular text by Sēng Zhào occurs *immediately* after the passage discussing the relationship between names and realities in terms of demonstrative pronouns seems to suggest that the neo-Mohist conclusion at the end of MSL results from the same editorial interference as the inclusion of ZWL (and possibly also of BML) in the *GSLZ* collection. As an illustration of this point, I reproduce here the relevant section of Sēng Zhào’s treatise.²⁸²

[39] Sēng Zhào 僧肇 (384–414 CE), ‘Bù zhēn kōng lùn’ 不真空論 (Discourse on Not Taking Emptiness as Real) 2:

Text

[1] 夫以名求物，物無當名之實。以物求名，
名無得物之功。物無當名之實，非物也；

Topic discussed

Names and realities
do not match

²⁸² For a translation of the first two parts, see [21], p 484 above.

名無得物之功，非名也。是以名不當實，實不當名。
名實無當，萬物安在？

[2] 故：《中觀》云：「物無彼此。」而人以此爲此，以彼爲彼。彼亦以此爲彼，以彼爲此。此、彼莫定乎一名，而惑者懷必然之志。

Generalization:
names are correlatives
(‘this’ and ‘that’)

[3] 然則彼此初非有，惑者初非無，既悟彼此之非有，有何物而可有哉？故知萬物非真，假號久矣！是以《成具》立強名之文，園林託指馬之況。如此，則深遠之言，於何而不在！

Summary and reference to authoritative sources

[...]

[3] However, both *that* and *this* are not originally being, while the deluded/delusion is not non-being. But now that we have realized that *that* and *this* are not being, what thing would there be of which we could admit its being? Therefore, one knows that the ten thousand things [= all kinds of things] are not real; they are never more than merely supposed designations. For this reason, the **Prabhāśasamādhisādhayatisūtra* (說成具光明定意經)²⁸³ establishes the formulations of forced names and [*the writing from*] the [*Qī*]-*Yuán* grove brings forward the examples of the ‘finger’ and the ‘horse’. And since it is like this, where would you not find [these kinds of] profound and far-reaching words?²⁸⁴

While our observations are obviously no *proof* for our specific – and rather speculative – hypotheses about the composition of the *GSLZ*, it is still notable that a *Madhyamaka* scholar like Yuánkāng held the *GSLZ* in such high esteem that he

283 There is no extant Sanskrit or Tibetan version of this *sūtra* (T 15, no. 639). Tradition attributes its translation to Zhīyào 支曜 (fl. 184–189 CE). Zürcher (1991) and Nattier (2003) both doubt its authenticity (Pu 2008: 27–28), but recent scholarship has argued for the accuracy of the inherited account (Pu 2008: 46). On the references in Sēng Zhào’s texts, see Pu 2008: 34–35. The quotation refers to p. 454, where the mind of the *bodhisattva* is characterized by its neutrality with regard to oppositions such as inside and outside, enlightened and common, arising and ceasing, and importantly for Sēng Zhào, also being and non-being (*yǒu wú* 有無). The instruction they concentrate on is that which has no distinguishing characteristics at all, and because “such an entity (*dharma*) has no place where it would be there, one forces its name (namely ‘instruction of the achievement of the bright light concentration’ [成具光明定意之教]) on it” (是法無所有法故，強為其名).

284 For a translation, see e.g. Liebenenthal 1948: 65–66; Robinson 1967: 227.

resorted to it for a definition of a crucial technical term. While any particular reconstruction of the precise relationship between a *Gōngsūn Lóngzǐ*-informed Buddhist like Yuánkāng and the alleged Buddhist-inspired compilers of the extant *GSLZ* will have to remain moot, this quotation proves that there was a perception in the seventh century CE that what the *GSLZ* had to say was also relevant in a Buddhist context. In view of this, it does not seem far-fetched to assume that a presumed compiler of the extant *GSLZ* who was active during this period not only may have been conversant in central *Madhyamaka* texts, such as the *Zhàolùn*, but that he moreover might have “amended” an older version of MSL with passages that take up – if not conceptually, at least in their wording – a *Madhyamaka* discourse on the universal relativity of all designations, even though he seems to have surreptitiously turned the original argument into something like its opposite. Additionally, if these references to the *Zhàolùn* are not mere chance, if they indeed played a role in the compilation of the *GSLZ* (as suggested above), it does not seem overreaching to assume that the compiler(s) of the received *GSLZ* also took Sēng Zhào’s appeal to the similes of ‘finger’ and ‘horse’ as an incitement to include an assumed predecessor of the extant *ZWL* in their collection.

Eventually, however the compilation of the extant *GSLZ* actually took place, given the intricate relation between *ZWL*, *BML*, and *JBL*, we can almost certainly exclude the possibility that the latter circulated independently of the former two. It certainly does not predate the inclusion of *BML* and *ZWL* in a common collection, be this the received *GSLZ* or some predecessor under whatever name. This implies that Shěn is wrong in assuming that, prior to the establishment of the *GSLZ*, *JBL* was contained in a purported *Shǒubáilùn*. If my line of argumentation is correct and the compilation of the *GSLZ* indeed only occurred in the seventh century CE, then the *received* versions of all three chapters can hardly have been composed as early as the Jin period, as Shěn would have it.²⁸⁵

I would like to conclude this investigation into possible Buddhist traces in the *GSLZ* with two final remarks. There are – at least – two aspects of the connections between the *GSLZ* and various Buddhist texts discussed above that seem problematic at first sight. First, we have noted, on the one hand, the similarity in both vocabulary and argument between *JBL* and the *Chéngshílùn*. Second, we have observed that passages in *TBL* – and possibly also in *MSL* – contain clear references to *Sarvāstivādic* texts. Additionally, we have shown that *MSL* resembles Sēng Zhào’s ‘Bù zhēn kōng lùn’ in various respects. We have thus demonstrated connections to at least three texts from competing Buddhist traditions. This also has

²⁸⁵ The attribution of the composition of the received *GSLZ* to Jin scholars, as also suggested by Kandel 1974: 23–24, would thus be wrong.

implications for our hypothesis regarding the composition of the *GSLZ*. Our assumption that *JBL*, with its close resemblance to the *Chéngshílùn*, was composed at the same time as the compilation of the extant *GSLZ* collection as a whole seems to come into conflict with our second hypothesis: that the compilation of the *GSLZ* – or an immediate predecessor with a different title – was encouraged by one particular passage from the *Zhàolùn*, an early *Madhyamaka* text. However, this particular dogmatic tension might be a mere phantom; at least some of the scholar-monks who studied the *Chéngshílùn* throughout the fifth and early sixth centuries also considered themselves propagators of *Mādhyamikan sānlùn* scholarship.²⁸⁶ In the first decades after its translation, the *Chéngshílùn* scholars appreciated the text because it refuted the scholastic “realism” of the *Sarvāstivādins* from an explicitly *hīnayānic* stance, and later because it was itself considered an adequate introduction to *hīnayānic* scholasticism.²⁸⁷ For this reason, Carsten Krause emphasizes the function of the *Chéngshílùn* as a bridge between *Mahāyāna* and *Hīnayāna* scholarship.²⁸⁸ And while warnings that an erroneous understanding of the *Chéngshílùn* might prompt nihilism arose as early as the late sixth century,²⁸⁹ the particular view that it is outright *incompatible* with *Madhyamaka* is thus comparatively late. It seems to gain momentum only over the course of the sixth century, and it culminates in Jízàng’s (549–623) wholesale rejection of the text due to its *hīnayānic* character.²⁹⁰ However, up to the early sixth century, this perspective seems to be of limited relevance. At the same time, what has been said also demonstrates that the frontline between the *Chéngshílùn* and *Madhyamaka* on the one side and *Sarvāstivāda* scholasticism on the other seems to have been fairly clear since the translation of the *Chéngshílùn* in the early fifth century. In view of the *Sarvāstivādic* reverberations in parts of the *GSLZ*, it is thus highly probable that it does not reflect a particular dogmatic perspective, but rather a general setting in which the engagement with *Mahāyāna* texts did not exclude the concomitant study of *Hīnayāna* works – also from the *Sarvāstivāda* tradition – even if only for propaedeutic purposes.

286 A case in point is Sēng Dǎo 僧導 (362–457), who assisted Kumārajīva with his translation of the *Satyasiddhiśāstra*. He wrote commentaries not only on the *Chéngshílùn*, but also on uncontroversially *Mādhyamikan* texts; see Cui 2016: 130, 134; cf. Tāng 1991: 720.

287 Krause 2003: 144.

288 Krause 2003: 126.

289 The respective warning from Zhilín 智琳 (409–487) also pertains to *Madhyamaka* texts and suggests that he considered the *Chéngshílùn* as representative of *Madhyamaka* thought. See Krause 2003: 151.

290 Cui 2016: 134.

Second, we have to explain why the practitioners of the kind of dialectical analysis manifestly inspired by the Mohist ‘Canons’, who apparently composed some and at least edited the other chapters of the received *GSLZ*, should refer to the *Chéngshílùn* (of all things) in the first instance. While the case is probably so complex and the material so limited that this question almost necessarily frustrates any attempt at a unidimensional explanation, there are some clues which point in a potentially helpful direction. Thus it may be relevant to take into account the reason Buddhist exegetes before Jízàng, most notably Kumārajīva himself, recommended the study of the *Chéngshílùn*, in spite of being aware of its *hīnayānic* tenets. As Tāng Yòngtóng 湯用彤 (1893–1964) has emphasized, it was for the sake of its detailed analysis of terms and concepts as well as its systematic structure that this text was considered a useful reference work for beginners in Buddhist studies.²⁹¹ This is indicated by the fact that the *Chéngshílùn* inspired the structure not only of Buddhist scholastic treatises, but arguably also of mundane texts, such as the sixth-century CE *Wénxīn diāolóng* 文心雕龍 (The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons), one of China’s first comprehensive literary critiques.²⁹² At the same time, the propaedeutic character of the *Chéngshílùn* may explain why the text quickly lost prestige over the course of the seventh century CE, and it also hints at a possible answer to our question as to why the allegedly non-Buddhist compilers of the *GSLZ* would at least implicitly have referred to it. It has been suggested that while its role as an introduction to Buddhist scholasticism was gradually taken over by other texts – such as Vasubandhu’s *Abhidharmakośakārikā*, which was used as a propaedeutic in *Yogācāra* contexts – other compendia on cognition and argumentation, such as Xuánzàng’s 玄奘 (602–664) *Chéngwéishí lùn* 成唯識論 or his translation of *hetuvidyā* texts such as Dignāga’s **Nyāyamukha* (*Yīnmíng zhènglǐ mén lùn* 因明正理門論), soon eclipsed the *Chéngshílùn* both in their degree of elaboration and in the systematicity of their exposition of the conceptual framework of Buddhist scholastics.²⁹³ At the same time, the propaedeutic character of the *Chéngshílùn* in the second half of the fifth and the early sixth centuries explains why it was current far beyond narrow Buddhist circles, and thus how it plausibly reached the Mohist-inspired composers of the treatises transmitted in the *GSLZ*. The fact that it was broadly cherished not only as a manual of Buddhist analytical nomenclature, but explicitly as a model of argumentation, neatly explains why non-Buddhist specialists

²⁹¹ Tāng 1998: 515.

²⁹² Cui 2016: 130, 135–136.

²⁹³ Cui 2016: 137.

in conceptual analysis and argumentative debate, such as the anonymous authors of the *GSLZ*, might have been aware of it. Moreover, their appreciation of the arguments of the *Chéngshìlùn* does not necessarily imply an awareness of their doctrinal implications or even an affinity to a particular Buddhist school. The fact that they avoided explicit references to Buddhist works further suggests that they intended to adopt the arguments and topics by concealing their Buddhist origin – possibly in an attempt to counter the dialectical subtlety of Buddhist scholastic texts with arguments cloaked in an explicitly Chinese guise. However, if we assume that the *Chéngshìlùn* played a constitutive role for JBL, and if we moreover maintain that this chapter does not predate the compilation of a text that comes close to the extant *GSLZ*, then the rapid decline of the *Chéngshìlùn*'s reputation by the end of the sixth century seems to countervene the idea that JBL, and hence the *GSLZ*, was composed only in second half of the seventh century, when records on a *GSLZ* containing six chapters become palpable.

As far as I can see, there are two possible ways to explain this apparent anomaly. First, the JF chapter, which observes Táng taboos that cannot predate the reign of emperor Gāozōng 高宗 (649–683), is set apart from the remaining parts of the *GSLZ* not only in terms of its introductory character, but also on a conceptual level. Terms like *shí* ('reality'), which have a very specific meaning throughout much of the remaining five sections of the *GSLZ*, are here used in a rather general sense. Its loose relation to the remaining chapters thus suggests that it could indeed be a later addition. Second, the Táng taboos in the JF chapter might simply point toward the date of an edition rather than that of the compilation of the extant *GSLZ*. Regardless of the date of this introductory chapter, the close connections between at least four of the main core chapters show that they were composed more or less at the same time, and possibly even by the same hand. In spite of the admitted lack of positive evidence, it thus seems imaginable that even the core of the extant *GSLZ* considerably predates the second half of the seventh century, possibly harkening back to the sixth century CE or earlier. The fact that it might have circulated under another title does not seem to contradict this assumption, and given the constitutive role of 'Jiānbáilùn' in its compilation, it would not seem surprising that this chapter title – and a modification of it, such as 'Shǒubáilùn'²⁹⁴ – should also have been used metonymically for the entire work. While this idea seems attractive, it is evident that the scarce records that have survived imply that most of the early processes of compilation and transmission of the *GSLZ*, including the details of

294 Shěn 1992a: 494.

the texts' relationship to contemporary Buddhist discourses, will remain in the shadows of history.

What appears to be promising is the investigation of the precise nature of the relationship of the *GSLZ* to Buddhist sources associated with the *Sarvāstivāda abhidharma*, but also with *Mādhyamikan sānlùn* scholarship, which have been only casually discussed in this study. We have observed that the *Essay on the Gōngsūn Lóngzǐ*, the earliest witness to the existence of a text arguably identifiable with our *GSLZ*, displays close similarities with *Sarvāstivādic* speculations about the cognitive status of the senses and their mutual relationship. We have also noted that *Sarvāstivāda* scholasticism flourished again in the aftermath of Xuánzàng's translation of considerable parts of the *abhidharma* literature – and it is no surprise that it is in Xuánzàng's translation of the encyclopedic *Abhidharma-mahāvibhāṣāśāstra* that we find a discussion of the metaphysical relation of entities such as stones, tropes such as whiteness, and elementary properties of matter such as hardness. And although the unchangeability of substance, as exemplified by the movement of one and the same counter through different levels of an abacus, already resorts to the term *wèi* ('position') in the earliest Chinese translation of this illustrative example from 383 CE,²⁹⁵ it is still notable that, as far as I can see, it is only in Xuánzàng's translations that the theories of Dharmatrāta and Vasumitra on the character of temporality are explicitly referred to in a terminology that is relevant to the initial part of TBL.²⁹⁶ If further research should confirm such an influence of Xuánzàng's translations on parts of the extant *GSLZ*, this would suggest that the Mohist-based parts of the *GSLZ* as we have them were not completed before the seventh century, a dating that would dovetail nicely with the bibliographical observations made by Shěn and Graham. However, what is striking is the fact that – with the possible exception of the allusions to the explanations of time and change by various *Sarvāstivāda* masters in its initial section – TBL shows no parallels with the *Sarvāstivāda* treatises translated under Xuánzàng's guidance. Notably, the clearest parallel to any *Sarvāstivādic* text in the *GSLZ*, which might even involve a case of textual borrowing, relates TBL to an

295 The *Vibhāṣāśāstra* was translated by Saṃghabhadra (Sēngqiébáchéng 僧伽跋澄), Dharmānandin (Tánmónántí 曇摩難提), Buddhārakṣa (Fútúluóchà 佛圖羅刹), and Mǐnzhì 敏智 in the late Eastern Jin period (383 CE).

296 Elaborating on a hypothesis of Erich Frauwallner, Bart Dessein has shown that, with the exception of the oldest available item of *vibhāṣa* literature, the four views on the relationship between the three time periods do not occur in the relevant sections on the three time periods (Dessein 2007: 339). This, along with the fact that their attribution to the four *Sarvāstivāda* masters is only attested in later versions (Dessein 2007: 335), suggests that these views were no longer considered to represent the most advanced position on the issue, but were rather considered as a sort of doxographical appendix. See Dessein 2007: 333, 335.

abhidharma text that was translated into Chinese as early as in the late fourth century CE, and which thus even predates the *Chéngshílùn*. This observation seems to open a new possibility in conceiving the history of compilation of the *GSLZ*: it is notable that traces of textual corruption in the extant *GSLZ* are not restricted to the so-called ‘authentic’ chapters (BML, ZWL), but also heavily affect the second part of JBL. It is thus certainly imaginable that both TBL and an earlier version of JBL were indeed composed under the impression of the *Chéngshílùn* and its anti-*Sarvāstivādic* program, possibly even leaning toward *Sarvāstivādic* positions, and that they were modified later in the second half of the seventh century, when the extant *GSLZ* was composed. If this is true, the early Táng editors of the *GSLZ* who came across the original versions of JBL and TBL (or fragments thereof) might even have been unaware of the similarities between these old documents, composed some two hundred years earlier, with the *Chéngshílùn*. Ignoring these references, they may have interpreted and complemented the pieces in the light of more recent intellectual developments, such as the alleged renaissance of *Sarvāstivādin* scholasticism. And while speculations about possible compilers of the original JBL and TBL – with their more or less manifest references to the *Chéngshílùn* and the *Sarvāstivāda abhidharma* – may seem elusive, it is worth noting that even the scarce records that have survived attest the existence of people entrenched in both Buddhist scholasticism and non-Buddhist traditions: Tánfēi 曇斐 (443–519), a *Mahāyāna* scholar–monk who had studied Mohist texts in his youth,²⁹⁷ was a close friend of Zhōu Yōng 周顒 (d. 493), a lay Buddhist who modeled his own theory of the two truths on the *Chéngshílùn* and who was conversant with Xiāo Zǐliáng 蕭子良 (458–493), one of the official propagators of the *Chéngshílùn*.²⁹⁸ Zhōu Yōng is also said to have rejected the intermingling of Buddhist and Daoist views allegedly propagated by his contemporary Zhāng Róng 張融 (443–497). That this same Zhāng Róng, who was no Buddhist himself, challenged Dào mèng 道猛 (411–475), a scholar–monk and expert in the *Chéngshílùn* at the time, to a public debate on the text illustrates the popularity of the Buddhist treatise well beyond Buddhist circles.²⁹⁹ Additionally, there is the case of Fǎchōng 法寵 (451–524), whom I have already mentioned earlier in this chapter, a specialist not only in the *Chéngshílùn*, but also in the *Sarvāstivāda abhidharma*, of whom it is moreover said that, late in his life, he discarded his Buddhist studies and engaged in *míngjiào*.³⁰⁰ Last but not least, Liú Jùn 劉峻 (462–521), famous for his commentary on the *Shìshuō xīnyǔ*, knew the *Chéngshílùn* well enough to provide, on two

²⁹⁷ *Gāosēngzhuàn* 高僧傳, T 2059, no. 50, p. 382.

²⁹⁸ Krause 2003: 172–173.

²⁹⁹ Krause 2003: 106.

³⁰⁰ Krause 2003: 108; Willemen et al. 1998: 134.

occasions in his commentary, rather subtle references to the text.³⁰¹ Like his contemporary Liú Xié 劉勰 (d. 522), whose work on literary criticism also reflects influences from this Buddhist treatise, and who estimated Gōngsūn Lóng's rhetoric brilliance – though apparently being ignorant of a work named after the debater –, Liú Jùn also mentions Gōngsūn Lóng: In his note on an episode about the futile attempt by the Eastern Jin (317–420) scholar Ruǎn Yù 阮裕 to explain, to one of his contemporaries, the *lùn* on the “white horse”, he quotes what corresponds to the opening lines of the extant BML, though not from the *GSLZ* or *Shǒubáilùn*, but from the *Kǒngcóngzǐ*, most likely from the ‘Gōngsūn Lóng’ chapter where it misses today. This indicates not only that he was unaware of any text by the title “Gōngsūn Lóngzǐ”, but moreover that he understands the term *lùn* rather to refer to the *argument* about the white horse than the homonymomous treatise. Even if reports about a written *Báimǎ lùn* by Zhāng Zhàn predate him by almost a century, Liú's lifetime thus may still be considered, with some degree of plausibility, as a *terminus post quem* for the composition of our extant *GSLZ*. Regardless of the correctness of this particular hypothesis, all of this demonstrates that, although a search for the authors of a Buddhist-informed *GSLZ* would obviously be futile, the possible milieu in which these people were active is well documented.

The observations presented in this chapter are obviously preliminary and in need of further scrutiny. However, at least with respect to the *Chéngshílùn*, the prospects for this are rather dim. The decline of *Chéngshílùn* scholarship has resulted in the loss of the entirety of more than twenty-four commentaries on the text – and this is just the number mentioned in hagiographies of the *Gāosēngzhuàn* 高僧傳 (Biographical Accounts of Eminent Monks).³⁰² In this way, the very documents that might have shed some light on the relation between *Chéngshílùn* scholasticism and the Mohist-inspired renaissance of disputation documented in the *GSLZ* seem irretrievably lost, from a Buddhist perspective as well.³⁰³

³⁰¹ Krause 2003: 106.

³⁰² Cui 2016: 133. Tāng Yòngtóng mentions 27 commentaries (1991: 728–730); cf. Krause 2003: 10.

³⁰³ Krause (2003: 8) notes that there are no more than “roughly half-a-dozen very short texts” left that were written by persons who dealt with the *Chéngshílùn* in a positive way.

8 Summary and Conclusion

The present investigation has highlighted various specificities of the extant *GSLZ* which seem to betray an implicit Buddhist influence on its composition. Following a sketch illustrating the composite and derivative nature of much of the received *GSLZ* – which is based on older textual materials, most notably the Mohist ‘Canons’ and ‘Explanations’ – I gathered materials documenting the renaissance of Mohist disputation from the late third century CE onward, arguing that it was not only essential for the rehabilitation of the semi-fictional figure of the debater Gōngsūn Lóng, but also to provide the intellectual context in which the received *GSLZ* was eventually compiled. I then tried to show in some detail that the main line of argument in JBL has a close parallel in the *Chéngshìlùn*, a Buddhist text held in high esteem in China throughout much of the fifth and sixth centuries CE. I have suggested that this similarity might be the result of the Buddhist text influencing JBL, an assumption which seems plausible not least in view of the similarities present in other chapters of the *GSLZ*, such as BML. Then I showed that two chapters of the *GSLZ* – TBL and MSL – are marked by salient caesuras between passages which stand out due to their obvious dependence on Mohist precedents, on the one hand, and sections that are largely unaffected by Mohist influences, on the other. I have suggested that while the *GSLZ* makes little effort to bridge these gaps, they can be readily filled in when one takes into account contemporary Buddhist sources that make plain the connections between crucial terms and topics alluded to in the *GSLZ*. The Buddhist discourse thus seems to complement a rationale for the composition of parts of the *GSLZ*. In a subsequent step, I discussed the connections between JBL, ZWL, and BML, arguing that the former might have been construed in order to conjoin the two latter chapters, which seem to have pre-existed in some form or other. I have shown that the term *zhǐ*, so prominent in ZWL, played a crucial role in Buddhist disputes about self-awareness, and that the term *jiān*, which connects JBL and ZWL, played an eminent role in meditative practices in Buddhism and beyond in fifth- and sixth-century China. I have also illustrated that the concepts it arguably interrelates – the term *cáng* (‘subsistence’) in JBL and the term *zhǐ* (‘index/pointer’) in ZWL – can both be associated with a rich variety of *topoi* in Buddhist discourses from the fifth through the early eighth centuries CE. While these references are less self-evident than the previously discussed cases, it nonetheless seems that various Buddhist discussions provided specifications of these three prominent terms that would have encouraged their adoption in a contemporary text such as the extant *GSLZ*. Additionally, in a final section, I presented a series of clues which the *Zhàolùn* possibly provides regarding the compilation of the extant *GSLZ*. I

suggested that not only the Buddhist-inspired modification of MSL discussed in section five, but also the inclusion of ZWL (and possibly also BML) in the *GSLZ* collection might actually have been inspired by the work of Sēng Zhào. This would imply that Shěn Yǒuding was wrong in assuming that an alleged predecessor of the extant *GSLZ* under the title *Shǒubáilùn* contained only TBL, JBL, and MSL. While I attempted to establish the interdependence between JBL, ZWL, and BML in section six, the evidence provided in the concluding section (section seven) – which is related to MSL – additionally points toward a possible motive for gathering these three texts into a single collection. As this motive is intrinsically related to MSL, it seems unlikely that they circulated independently of this latter chapter. The only “isolated” chapters which thus remain are TBL and the introductory JF chapter.

It is clear that the sequence of sections in the present chapter proceeds from more established insights to ever more speculative views. In sum, this investigation – however tentative and speculative it must remain – has shown that, in spite of the obvious lack of *explicit* references to Buddhist texts or concepts throughout the entire *GSLZ*, argumentative and structural peculiarities of the text render it more likely than not that it was composed against a strong Buddhist background. While many of the single observations presented in this chapter remain inconclusive in isolation, the mosaic which results from combining these single pieces of evidence lays bare various layers of unmistakable Buddhist traces in the vocabulary, argumentation, and arrangement of the *GSLZ*.

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