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Paper title: Early Chinese Interpretations of *Pratītyasamutpāda*: Sense perception and desire in the translations of An Shigao 安世高 and the writings of his Chinese followers.

Author: Dr. Eric M. Greene (Teaching Fellow in East Asian Religions, University of Bristol)

Contact: eric.greene@bristol.ac.uk

In this paper I will examine the translations of technical terms from the *pratītyasamutpāda* formula in the writings of An Shigao 安世高 (fl. 149–169 CE) and his Chinese followers in the late second and early third centuries. I will argue that pre-Buddhist Chinese understandings of sense perception, particularly the relationship between sense perception and desire, decisively influenced both An Shigao's translations and the interpretations of his followers.

As the first translator of Buddhist texts into Chinese, the importance of An Shigao's oeuvre in the history of Chinese Buddhism is well known. However rigorous study of this material has become possible only recently thanks to careful identification of the authentic An Shigao corpus (by scholars such as Erik Zürcher and Jan Nattier), new identifications of Indic parallels to An Shigao translations (by scholars such as Stefano Zacchetti), and the recent manuscript discoveries at Kongō-ji temple in Japan that have uncovered several long-lost An Shigao translations.

I will use these new discoveries and texts to analyze how An Shigao and his followers interpreted the middle section of *pratītyasamutpāda* (*āyatana* → *sparśa* → *vedanā* → *trṣṇā*). *Pratītyasamutpāda* was a key topic of doctrinal interest for An Shigao. It not only appears in many of his translations, it is also the main subject of the so-called *A han kou jie* 阿含口解, a text that Zacchetti has identified as an oral commentary made by An Shigao in China.

As is well known, the middle section is of central importance in many Indian interpretations of *pratītyasamutpāda* because it is here that the fruits of old karma—the sense organs, their percepts, and the resulting sensations—give way to newly arising defilement. Yet as I will show, An Shigao struggled to find appropriate terminology to render these terms. We find, for example, no less than 10 different translations for *sparśa*. This diversity of terminology, as well as the extremely peculiar nature of the chosen translations, does not appear to be accidental. Rather, it seems that the notion of sense contact (*sparśa*) as a neutral process occurring *prior* to the arising of desire conflicted with the standard Chinese understanding that the sense organs themselves have desires and, independently of the will of the heart-mind (*xin* 心), seek out their desired objects. I will demonstrate that this Chinese understanding influenced An Shigao's translations and, even more importantly, the subsequent interpretations found in the commentaries of his Chinese followers, where we find that the Chinese notion of *qing* 情, “emotion,” plays an important role in explaining how sense perception occurs.