

## Who Wrote the *Da mingdu jing* 大明度經 (T225)?

### A Reassessment of the Evidence

Jan Nattier

The International Research Institute for Advanced Buddhology  
Tokyo, Japan

In 1969 an American scholar of Buddhism, Lewis R. Lancaster, wrote an article in which he argued that the *Da mingdu jing*—attributed to Zhi Qian 支謙 from the time of the earliest extant scriptural catalogues—is not actually his work, but was instead produced by the Han-period translator An Xuan 安玄. According to Lancaster, the “avoidance of transliteration” (that is, the preference for translation) that characterizes the *Da mingdu jing* is not at all typical of Zhi Qian’s other work, but on the contrary, serves as evidence that this text is the work of someone else. Writing in 1985, a Japanese scholar, Katsuzaki Yūgen 勝崎裕彦, took precisely the opposite position, describing the *Da mingdu jing* “as the most Zhi Qian-ish” (もっとも支謙的) of Zhi Qian’s translations. For Katsuzaki—and indeed, for Japanese scholars in general—the preference for translation (Katsuzaki uses the term *iyaku* 義訳) rather than transcription (*onsha* 音写) is one of the very hallmarks of Zhi Qian’s translation style.

In this paper I will reconsider the question of the authorship of the *Da mingdu jing*, beginning with a discussion of methodological issues involved in establishing the authenticity of translator attributions in general. I will then employ a combination of approaches to attempt to determine, with a reasonable degree of certainty, who was responsible for the creation of this very distinctive text.