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**Autor:** Vetter, Tilmann

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## ON THE ORIGIN OF MAHĀYĀNA BUDDHISM AND THE SUBSEQUENT INTRODUCTION OF *PRAJÑĀPĀRAMITĀ*

Tilman Vetter, Leiden

The immediate cause for focussing on the subject was a study of compounds in the prologue of the *Pañca* (which has appeared in WZKS 1993).<sup>1</sup> Some conclusions impelled me to take the question of a lay initiative more seriously than I had been used to do. That an answer in the affirmative was in the interest of Japanese lay buddhists, could no longer be an excuse for ignoring this possibility.

The essay has two parts. The first tries to show that lay believers played an important role in what I consider the group of initiators of Mahāyāna buddhism, custodians and visitors of *stūpas* which were supposed to contain relics of the Buddha. One or more of them is likely to have conceived the idea to become like the Buddha and to imitate, for that purpose, heroic acts of his former lives, as they were told and depicted at such a site.

The second part deals with the background and relative chronology of early Mahāyāna practices which, on the basis of this assumption, must be called secondary. It shows increasing involvement of monks, but also new initiatives of lay believers.

The essay tries to organize the multifaceted information on early Mahāyāna into something coherent. The basic assumption owes much to Akira Hirakawa's 1963 article, in which the origin of the Mahāyāna has been related to the worship of *stūpas*. However, his observations have to be completed and modified by recent discoveries. I would like to give Hirakawa all the merit of a breakthrough in this field and call my attempt an adapted form of his idea, but he might no longer recognize it as his own. I take the full responsibility for what is written here.

Of the publications which influenced this 'adaptation' I would especially like to mention those by Paul Harrison. Through them the documents have been, as far as I have checked, made available in a

1 This is a revised and annotated version of a lecture given at Lausanne University in January 1992 and, slightly developed, at a seminar on Buddhist lay believers at Leiden University in May 1993. For various suggestions to improve this essay I would like to thank Leendert van Daalen†, Harunaga Isaacson, Karel van Kooij, Roelof van Reenen, Lambert Schmithausen, and Ernst Steinkellner.

thoroughly reliable manner; the conclusions are sound and a good basis for further research. I also admire the choice of English words to translate Buddhist terminology; it points to long reflection on the meaning and often seems to be the best we can have in this language, well worth imitating.

I should also mention Gregory Schopen who has drawn our attention to large quantities of especially epigraphical documents in this field and carefully discussed them, with abundant references to other scholars. But in a few cases I cannot follow him, when he generalizes his conclusions. Moreover, he likes to establish conflicts where I can see only cases of unrelatedness between facts of common religious practice (obviously shared, but not discussed by intellectuals) and ideas of religious specialists.

A word about two interesting schemes to integrate data belonging to early Mahāyāna which I could not follow. Andrew Rawlinson suggested that a multidimensional model existed in Mahāyāna from the beginning.<sup>2</sup> It is not my impression that the movement began in such a cooperative way. New methods seem to have been invented in the course of time (e.g. *prajñāpāramitā*, which for Rawlinson is an original element). This would

- 2 Rawlinson 1983 p.170. Rawlinson's idea of an original synthesis seems to be stamped by his study of the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka*, which in my view is not an early Mahāyāna *sūtra* (see below). Though rejecting the basic scheme of explanation I think his observations and ideas are worth noticing. E.g. the three themes he suggests on p.167, glorification of the Buddha, spiritual transformation and *paramārtha* respectively based on *stūpa*, *āraṇyāyatana* and *vihāra* are a useful hermeneutical device.

More interesting details can be found in Rawlinson 1977. Referring to his 1972 Lancaster University Ph.D.Thesis "Studies in the *Lotus Sūtra*" he considers (p.4), on the basis of external evidence, the chapters 21-27 of the *Lotus Sūtra* as later additions (Group 3), and suggests, on the basis of internal evidence, to divide the first twenty chapters into chs. 1-9 (Group I) and chs. 10-20 (Group 2). "Group 2 mentions writing the *dharma-paryāya* of the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* and books, young women of good family, householders, women, and shrines (*caitya*); Group I either ignores them altogether or has only one or two references most of which are suspect anyway." In note 15 which is appended to the first clause (about writing and books) Rawlinson says: "i.e. the SP (= chs 1-9) was originally transmitted orally. This clearly has consequences for the chronology of the Mahāyāna, though we do not have enough evidence at the moment to date the commitment to writing of the Buddhist *sūtras* (quite apart from the fact that we cannot assume that they were all put into written form at the same time). In addition, the written form was important because it gave rise to the bibliolatry that is characteristic of one strand of the Mahāyāna. The written form of the *Prajñāpāramitā* is referred to as early as Rgs iii 4 (= *Aṣṭa* (M) 57)."

have led to synthetic schemes, but not always. The end of the present essay will bring an example of a method which, as a *sūtra* tells us, was not accepted by all bodhisattvas.

Arthur L. Basham's approach<sup>3</sup>, which focusses on celestial bodhisattvas, is quite reasonable in many respects. But from the first Chinese translations, as Harrison 1987 has shown, we can infer that the first Mahāyānists were not interested in submitting to such bodhisattvas, if they already had conceived them. They wanted themselves to become great bodhisattvas.<sup>4</sup>

- 3 BASHAM 1981. The line Basham draws from the first expectations of a future Buddha in the Pāli Tipiṭaka to the worship of celestial bodhisattvas in Mahāyāna is reasonable, but it touches neither the first, nor an exclusive motive of Mahāyānists. A similar approach, at least in arranging things, can be found in Snellgrove 1987, 58 ff.

Incidentally, the remark in BASHAM 1981, p.31 "The latest possible date for the beginning of belief in heavenly Bodhisattvas can be reached from the longer *Sukhāvativyūha*, which was first translated into Chinese by Lokakṣema, who lived from AD 147 to 186." is no strong evidence. Such a translation, if it was made, has not survived and is not known as to its precise contents. Amitābha worship is however reflected in another late Han translation, T.418 (see HARRISON PraS p.31-33). This text points to a basic version of the *Sukhāvativyūha* (see HARRISON 1978, 35-57). But it may be doubted that this version mentioned Avalokiteśvara (see HARRISON 1987 pp.79 and 86).

On p.44 he alludes to his interpretation of Aśoka's 8th Rock Edict as given in BASHAM 1979, suggesting that Aśoka here intended to tell his subjects that he had set out for a Buddha's enlightenment, but had not yet arrived there. A daring idea, which would provide us with an early date for the existence of the ideal of the Great vehicle. Unfortunately, this interpretation is not supported by other edicts of Aśoka. What is more, it is difficult to imagine that Aśoka told his subjects such an ideal, which, as far as I can see, first was thought to be realized only after innumerable rebirths, whereas in all other edicts, as Schmithausen recently (1992, 138) has emphasized, only the attainment of heaven, no rebirth, appears. It is less unlikely that he had such an idea than that he published it in addition to the very consistent propaganda for the yonder world without any reference to what would happen there after some time.

- 4 The title "How the Mahāyāna began" of GOMBRICH 1988 promises more than the paper contains. As the author himself says (p. 9). he only presents the hypothesis that the early Mahāyāna texts owe their *survival* to the fact that they were written down. Gombrich depends here too much on conclusions in SCHOPEN 1975. If we take seriously what the earliest version of the *Aṣṭasahasrikā Prajñāpāramitā* says about its oral transmission (see Appendix Cult of the Book), the hypothesis cannot apply to this *sūtra*'s early days. Lack of both, oral and written transmission, could



## I

Nearly all Mahāyāna texts seem to have been transmitted by monks and focus on monks. Lay people are less conspicuous. This may be the reason why outside Japan scholars hardly posed the question whether lay believers originally had equal rights or were perhaps the initiators of the movement. When the problem of the institutional origin of Mahāyāna was raised, the Mahāsāṃghika monk(?)<sup>5</sup> tradition was considered the most likely candidate. That they had a *dhāraṇīpiṭaka* and similar doctrines had become known from Vasumitra's doxography<sup>6</sup>. In view of the date of the source (around 500 C.E.) the facts could however also be interpreted as signs of Mahāyāna influence on this tradition. The Sthavira monk tradition also was mentioned, because particular Mahāyāna methods and arguments were supposed to have been developed from tenets found in their scriptures.<sup>7</sup> I acknowledge these relations or influences, but do not consider them as enlightening with regard to the very origin of the movement (see also Bechert 1973, 12-13).

Most western buddhologists are today aware of the possibility of the laity's involvement, though they reject it more often than not. That they are acquainted with the question seems to be, for a great part, due to Etienne Lamotte's translations of some Mahāyāna scriptures from Chinese and Tibetan versions, and to his positive remarks on the laity's contribution based on these texts<sup>8</sup>. Especially his translation of the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa*<sup>9</sup> had an impact and prepared for some understanding of the debate in Japan.

perhaps explain why we have no *sūtras* or other texts representing exclusively what I assume to be the first, the heroic stage of the movement. It only appears in references such as *AṣṭaV* 14,10 "*kiṃ bodhisattvo duṣkaracārikāṃ carati? yāni vā tāni sattvānāṃ kṛtaśo duḥkhāny utsahate pratyanubhavitum?*" etc. (see below).

- 5 I am not sure what the name Mahāsāṃghika originally meant to say. Was it the majority of monks against a minority of long ordained monks (*sthavira*, *thera*)? Or was it a concept of a *saṃgha* that included lay believers (cf. D II 104-106), opposed by conservative monks who called themselves Sthaviras/Theras?
- 6 On the dependability of this text see SCHOPEN 1988, 536.
- 7 A sketch of scholarly positions can be found in BAREAU 1964, pp. 120-121; more details in LAMOTTE 1954. The most detailed discussion that I know of is HARRISON 1982, esp. 227 ff.
- 8 E.g. LAMOTTE 1954 p.378: "L'idéal mahāyāniste est l'incarnation même des aspirations religieuses du bouddhiste laïc. Membre minute iure de la Communauté,

Unfortunately Lamotte had no clear idea of what kind the involvement of lay believers might have been and how historically to relate the contributions of laity and monks. The first scholar who assumed lay initiative and at the same time came up with a workable theory was Hirakawa Akira with his 1963 paper "The rise of Mahāyāna Buddhism and its Relationship to the Worship of Stupas". His basic idea is that the Great Vehicle originated in circles of *stūpa* worshippers, not in monasteries.

Hirakawa's paper contains a lot of observations with regard to passages which may contain memories of earlier stages, but cannot directly be used to support his idea, e.g. passages of the *Mahāprajñāpāramitāśāstra*, or of SP and other *sūtras* translated into Chinese only in the late third century or later. Thanks to Harrison 1987 and other contributions after 1963 we are now more in a position to organize the material historically. And we know better what Mahāyāna originally meant: to strive for buddhahood, to *be* a bodhisattva in the sense of a buddha-to-be, not of a 'bodhi-being'<sup>10</sup>, nor of a being depending on a bodhi-being.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, as I trust to have shown in an article (1984), realising universal emptiness has not been a means for buddhahood from the very beginning of the movement. Furthermore, it seems to be clear that living buddhas in other worlds had already been conceived, but not yet one buddha who emanates manifestations or had three bodies (see Harrison 1992). And

l'upāsaka avait dû combattre pour obtenir l'égalité des droits avec les moines: [...]" See also LAMOTTE H pp. 8992 and 686 ff.

- 9 L'Enseignement de Vimalakīrti (*Vimalakīrtinirdeśa*), Louvain - Leuven 1962.
- 10 On this expression, which represents fully developed bodhisattva-logy, see NAGAO 1981, esp. p.73.
- 11 See also LETHCOE 1977. In her *Conclusion* (p.274) she writes: "The *Aṣṭa.* and *Pañca.* are written from different points of view. Whereas the *Aṣṭa.*'s primary interest is in the training of a successful Bodhisattva, the *Pañca.*'s additions show a major concern in the ways at least one type of irreversible Bodhisattva helps beings, [...], the *Pañca.* attributes novices' success to the efforts of irreversible Bodhisattvas. [...] For the *Aṣṭa.*, the relationship [between irreversible bodhisattvas and other beings] is at least sometimes conceived as reciprocal: a Bodhisattva may give his life to satisfy the needs of some men or animals, but through his gift he personally advances along the Bodhisattva's path. The *Pañca.*'s irreversible Bodhisattvas [...] do not benefit personally from helping other beings. Finally, in the *Pañca.*, irreversible Bodhisattvas do not merely teach, but also take the much more active role of 'establishing' and 'maturing' beings in religiously beneficial practices and states. [...]"

books were not yet revered instead of relics (see Appendix Cult of the Book).<sup>12</sup>

I shall now describe how the Mahāyāna is likely to have begun. Referring to a period and group not directly covered by written documents of whatever material, the basic assumption can be best explained by showing that things can be better understood with it than without it. Evidence occurring in Hirakawa 1963 will sometimes be indicated, but not again quoted. Other evidence, and objections which can be anticipated, will be mentioned and discussed in footnotes.

Early Mahāyāna *sūtras*, when mentioning *stūpas*, generally mean *stūpas* containing remains of Buddha Śākyamuni or, later, of another Buddha, or a book with the Buddhas' message. That other persons also were considered worthy of a *stūpa*, as e.g. the *Mahāparinibbānasutta* (D II 142-3) says, and in fact were honoured in this way, as archeological evidence shows<sup>13</sup>, is irrelevant in this connection (see below).

The importance of the place where Śākyamuni attained awakening is acknowledged (see Appendix Cult of the Book); it and other important places of his life could have been marked by a *stūpa* without content<sup>14</sup>. But when *stūpas* are mentioned, early Mahāyāna texts generally refer to a *stūpa* with content. One gets the impression that Buddha relics were

12 I am not sure of the position of "transference of merit". It seems to be presupposed, not created by early Mahāyāna. Only when one thinks that one can give a special direction to the riping of one's good karma (*pariṇāmanā*), can one come up with the idea to transform a large mass of merit into buddhahood, which is a basic concept for the first phase of the movement. Transference of the merit of a gift to other persons, also by monks and nuns, can be seen in early inscriptions from about 150 B.C.E. onward (SCHOPEN 1984, pp. 23 ff.). The first document which dedicates the merit of a gift to the supreme knowledge [i.e. buddhahood] of all beings and could therefore be called Mahāyānist, is on an image of Amitābha dated in the "6th year of Huviṣka [104 C.E.?", which is earlier than the first Chinese translations of Mahāyāna texts (SCHOPEN 1984. pp.40 ff. and SCHOPEN 1987 pp.99 ff.). As a bodhisattva practise transference of merit to other persons is however not conspicuous in these first translations.

13 See SCHOPEN 1991. Also objects considered to have belonged to such persons could be honoured by a *stūpa*, (id., p.320-321, with many references to scholarly work).

14 D II 141 speaks of *cetiyas* in this context.

scarce<sup>15</sup>, and that some groups were glad to find they could compete with famous places of Buddha's life or of Buddha's relics by putting their holy text, representing Śākyamuni's Dharmakaya, in the centre of a *stūpa* and declaring it more worth worshipping than a *stūpa* which held a share of his bodily remains.

By originally focussing on *stūpas* considered to contain a relic of the Buddha the texts seem to resume ideas of a paragraph in the *Mahāparinibbānasutta* (D II 164-8) and its parallels. There it is said that the remains after the funeral were given to groups and individuals of the warrior and brahmin class who promised to build *stūpas* for their share.<sup>16</sup> They were lay adherents. In another paragraph (D II 141) the Buddha says to Ānanda (and the monks present) that they should not worry themselves about the funeral arrangements, but continue to strive for the highest goal; there were wise Khattiyas, Brahmins and heads of households who would take care of the funeral<sup>17</sup>.

15 No confirmation can be found of the story that Aśoka divided Buddha's relics and built 84,000 *stūpas*. Cp. Gérard FUSSMAN, *Symbolism of the Buddhist Stupa*, JIABS vol.9 no.2 (1986), p.45.

16 WALSHE 1987, p.275-277: "And when the Lord's body was burnt, [...] only the bones remained. [...] Then the Mallas [of Kusinārā] honoured the relics for a week in their assembly hall, [...]. And King Ajātasattu [...] sent a message to the Mallas of Kusinārā: 'The Lord was a Khattiya and I am a Khattiya, I am worthy to receive a share of the Lord's remains. I will make a great *stūpa* for them.' The Licchavis of Vesālī heard, and sent a message: 'The Lord was a Khattiya and we are Khattiyas, we are worthy [...]' The Sakyas of Kapilavatthu [...] The Bulayas of Allakappa [...] The Koliyas of Rāmagāma [...] The Brahmin of Veṭṭhādīpa heard, and he sent a message: 'The Lord was a Khattiya, I am a Brahmin [...]' The Mallas of Pāvā [...] And then he [=the Brahmin Doṇa] made a good and fair division into eight portions, and then he said to the assembly: Gentlemen, please give me the urn, and I will erect a great *stūpa* for it.' [...]. So they gave Doṇa the urn. Now the Moriyas of Pippalavāna heard of the Lord's passing [...] 'The Lord was a Khattiya and we are Khattiyas. We are worthy to receive a portion of the Lord's remains, [...]'. '[...] they have all been divided up. So you must take the embers.' Then King Ajātasattu of Magadha built a great *stūpa* for the Lord's relics at Rājagaha. The Licchavis of Vesālī built one at Vesālī, the Sakyans of Kapilavatthu [...]"

Parallels in Chinese translations are discussed in WALDSCHMIDT 1948 pp. 305-330 and BAREAU 1971 pp.308-323.

17 Cp. WALSHE 1987, p.264. With regard to parallel places, WALDSCHMIDT 1948 p.210 says: "Nach gemeinsamer Überlieferung hat der Buddha die Bestattung für eine Angelegenheit der Laien erklärt. [...] das gehe die Mönche nichts an.", and



The nucleus of the account of the division of the Buddha's bodily remains and the building of ten *stūpas*, as it can be inferred from several versions, could be true<sup>18</sup>. If one is very sceptical (as e.g. Snellgrove 1973

BAREAU 1971 p.37: "[...] toutes nos sources sont bien d'accord sur ce double point: les funérailles du Buddha sont le devoir des laïques et non des moines, qui n'ont pas à s'en soucier."

The paragraph is discussed in SCHOPEN 1991a. On pp. 191-2, he adduces two passages from the Mūlasarvāstivāda-vinaya showing that monks had to perform the worship of the dead body of a fellow monk, before bringing it to the *śmaśāna*. SCHOPEN 1991 shows that monks built small *stūpas* for fellow monks. Such worship and building of *stūpas* may be a deviation of the original ideal of a monk's behaviour, but would have come up much earlier than was assumed till now. This need not mean that such behaviour was a purely literary product. Incidentally, the older the building and worshipping of *stūpas* for monks is, the more convincing the tradition that the Buddha's body was dealt with by the laity and that they built *stūpas* for their shares; monks were simply compelled to admit this tradition against their own customs. And then it is also probable that they followed a standard set by the laity, and not that building and worshipping a *stūpa* with the Buddha's remains was only a special case of their own custom.

The Pāli canonical tradition might have preserved the old ideal more faithfully, as ROTH 1980 suggests: its Vinaya does not include a particular *stūpa* chapter, while other Vinayas have such sections. But a paragraph in the Pāli *Mahāparinibbāna-sutta* (D II 141-2) immediately following the advice given to monks that they should not worry themselves about the funeral arrangements, already shows concern for these arrangements and the building of a *stūpa* for the Buddha and its worship. That this paragraph says that the Buddha's body should be dealt with like the body of a *cakkavatti* monarch, points to composition after the beginning of the Mauryan empire, as BAREAU (1971, 38; 1979, 63) suggests. The beginning would have been less magnificent, but may already have shown plain symbols of royal authority and power (ROTH 1980, 183). For monks and nuns, the *stūpa* became a memorandum of what they had to do and to aim at (ROTH 1980, 186; HARVEY 1984). For the average pilgrim it might have had magical significance (see Appendix Cult of the Book).

- 18 Even such a detail as the story that the Sakyas of Kapilavatthu got a portion of the Buddha's remains may be true, in spite of a tale found in later commentaries (see *Dictionary of Pāli Proper Names* by G.P. Malalasekera, vol. II London [1938] 1960, p. 876). It says that the Buddha three times prevented Viḍḍabha, son of king Pasenadi of Kosala, from killing the people of Kapilavatthu, but desisted to do so a fourth time. A reason for doubting the story could be the discovery of an urn in a *stūpa* near Piprahwa which could be the site of the ancient Kapilavatthu (SRIVASTAVA 1980). The Brāhmī inscription on the urn states that it contains relics of the Buddha and was a gift of the Sākya Sukiti and his brothers, their sisters, sons and wives. BAREAU 1981 has dealt with the story and come to the conclusion

is), one could at least assume that it shows how tradition thought about the matter at the beginning of Aśoka's period<sup>19</sup>, when the Sthaviras were not yet geographically dispersed and branches had not started their own transmissions of buddhaword. If one thinks that the story is so similar in different transmissions that it could have been composed in one tradition and then have entered the others some time after Aśoka (cp. Bareau 1980,1 and Schopen 1984, 9-22), one should at least assume that this happened before the second half of the second century B.C.E. The inscriptions found at Bhārhut and Sāñcī show only a small number of princely donors; Brahmins are not conspicuous (Lamotte H 455, Dehejia 1992,36). It is not easy to imagine that such an environment produced a story in which only warriors and Brahmins play a role.

The distinguished lay believers who built the first Buddha *stūpas*, may also have felt responsible for their maintenance and adornment, but it is not necessary to assume that they themselves supervised daily activities. And they may have tried to organize things in such a way that the place did not always depend on their financial support. A motive for such support is likely to have been propagated. In D II 140-141 and 142-143, a heavenly world is promised to the *kulaputta* (replaced in the next par. by *bhikkhū bhikkhuniyo upāsakā upāsikāyo*) who dies at one of the four famous places of Buddha's life, and to all those whose hearts have become calm by seeing a *stūpa* of the Tathāgata, or of a *paccekasambuddha*, or of a *sāvaka* of the Tathāgata, or of a wheel-turning king. The same result or more may have been promised for contributing to the maintenance and completion of a *stūpa*. A *stūpa* in good repair and embellished by works of art was

(p.73): "[...] il est donc très probable que le massacre de Śākya par un roi des Kosala nommé Virūḍhaka, peu avant le Parinirvāṇa du Buddha, soit une pure légende, inventée vers le début du IIe siècle avant notre ère pour expliquer pourquoi les pèlerins bouddhistes trouvaient à Kapilavastu et aux environs une réalité bien différente de ce que les légendes contant la jeunesse du futur Buddha les avaient conduits à imaginer."

- 19 As to this date compare BAREAU (1971 p.313) who says with regard to the recognition of the names of places mentioned in the parallel records: "En résumé, à l'époque où fut composée la version commune de notre récit, très vraisemblablement, avant le règne d'Aśoka et sans doute même assez longtemps avant, dans le courant du IVe siècle avant notre ère, la Communauté reconnaissait comme authentiques, comme réellement élevés sur les restes du Buddha dix *stūpa* situés à Kuśinagara, à Pāvā, à Calakalpa, à Rāmagrāma, à Viṣṇudvīpa, à Vaiśālī, à Kapilavastu, à Rājagṛha, à Pippalivana ou Pippalavatī et en un endroit que certains textes appellent Droṇagrāma mais que les autres ne précisent pas."



probably as such worth visiting and supporting. Edifying activities organized at such places might have been an additional attraction.

At the sites of some old Buddha *stūpas* such as Sārnāth also remains of monasteries are found, but not as ancient as the *stūpa*<sup>20</sup>. *Stūpas* seem to have led to building monasteries in their compounds in ancient times, not yet the other way round. Probably the organization of some *stūpas* produced such a wealth that a monastery could be built and maintained. Monks and nuns may have been attracted by the wealth; monasteries as we know them perhaps came into existence only then. But the people in charge of the *stūpa* could also have attempted to enhance the prestige of the place by inviting monks and nuns to settle there. Judging from later developments, we must assume that monks and nuns living at such a place will soon have controlled its organization.

What does this mean with regard to the origin of Mahāyāna? The visitor of a *stūpa* could expect to hear — and perhaps also see depicted<sup>21</sup> — stories about the Buddha whose relics were preserved there (or whose attainments were remembered there). Perhaps storytellers were officially employed, but the audience also might have contributed to the repertoire. After some time the main scenes were carved into the wood, later stone, of the railings. The oldest testimonies, carvings in stone from the large *stūpas* of Bhārhut and Sāñcī, point to stories about Śākyamuni's previous lives as well as episodes of his last life (Lamotte H 444-6).

The scenes of his previous lives can be identified with Pāli Jātaka Gāthās, though not totally. In Bhārhut he is depicted as having once been a woman, which cannot be found in the Theravāda redaction (Lamotte H 444). Already popular themes of prudence or indiscretion (no.324) are present there, besides heroic themes of sacrificing one's life for one's friends (no.206) and subjects, faithfulness and truth, which seem more appropriate to explain the Buddha's eminence. Most of the corresponding Pāli Gāthās are free of Buddhist terminology (Alsdorf 1964), though the verses on Sujāta (no.352) are fit to symbolize the Buddha's preaching. The

20 Oral communication by my colleague Karel VAN KOOY, mentioning as an example Debala Mitra, *Buddhist Monuments*. Calcutta: Sahitya Samsad, 1971, p.68. This corresponds with what Gustav ROTH 1980, 185-186 remarks about the extension of the *stūpa* adducing as an example the Bhājā Vihāra.

21 Victor H. MAIR, *Painting and Performance. Chinese Picture Recitation and its Indian Genesis* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1988), though not precisely dealing with our problem, strongly suggests a long history of showing pictures while telling Jātaka's or other stories.

popular themes seem to reflect the general householder's, especially the merchant's, mentality. Those tales, however, which convincingly point to impressive roots of merit in previous lives reflect ideal behaviour of 'knights', as also described in many parts of the *Mahābhārata*. See e.g. the tale of the monkeys' king (*Mahākapijātaka*, no. 407) which ends thus: *sabbesaṃ sukham eṭṭhabbaṃ khattiyena pajānatā*. These products of *kṣatriya* ideology were made buddhist by putting them into the context of the rebirths of the Buddha. Attributed to his previous lives they mean: by the admirable deeds contained in such stories he became the highly talented person who could, in his last existence, discover and effectively preach the four noble truths, events to which the sculptures also refer.

While the illustrations of events of his last life imply an admonition to become a monk or nun (who were already present as donors in Bhārhut and Sāñcī), the stories about his former lives point to the accumulation of merit by a lay person. Lay people could take them as examples of deeds leading to heaven<sup>22</sup>. But the *context* was that the deeds had to be seen as employed to develop the moral and intellectual capacities of a person. Those who lived at or visited a Buddha *stūpa* may not have needed much time to take a next step, namely to conceive the idea that more persons than the few known at that time from legends (see Bareau 1980) should employ such means to become a founder of a Dharma tradition in one of the innumerable worlds one then assumed.

Some lay persons may now have tried to accumulate merit in such a heroic way. If this was difficult, one could try another means mentioned in the Jātakas and widely accepted in Indian culture: renouncing one's wealth once for all and living in the jungle (*aranya*). Joining the buddhist *saṅgha*, however, is not a conspicuous theme in the Jātaka Gāthās and therefore not the first thing likely to be done by those who followed their paradigm. And

22 This was at least the destiny of Vessantara as presented in the last Gāthā of the Jātaka: *tato Vessantaro rājā dānam datvāna khattiyo / kāyassa bhedā sappañño saggam so upapajjathā'ti*. ALSDORF 1957, p.60-61, convincingly says that this Jātaka, when one only considers the verses, without the Cariyāpiṭaka quotations, "hat nichts, das als spezifisch buddhistisch gelten müsste. Geschichten von übermässiger, bis zur Absurdität oder zum Wahnwitz gesteigerter Freigebigkeit sind im ganzen Orient beliebt [...]. In Indien gibt es genug Beispiele, und gerade die Legenden von freigebigen und sich selbst aufopfernden Šibi-Königen sind, wie Fick (Jacobi-Festschrift. S.146 f.) richtig hervorhebt, gemeinindisch: [...]. [...] das Wort Bodhisattva überhaupt nicht vorkommt. [...] Als für die durchaus unbuddhistische Atmosphäre des alten Gedichts kennzeichnend [...] die erstaunliche, um nicht zu sagen bedenkliche Rolle des Alkohols."

the *saṅgha* itself would not directly be prepared to admit persons with such an aim and its heroic means, which easily could come in conflict with the monastic rules. The first bodhisattva renunciants are therefore not likely to have entered the buddhist order. They may nonetheless often have gathered<sup>23</sup> or even lived in groups. In Mahāyāna texts a bodhisattva *gaṇa* or *saṅgha* (as distinguished from the *bhikṣu saṅgha*) is sometimes mentioned<sup>24</sup>. Inspired eloquence (*pratibhāna*), which is a prominent bodhisattva quality (see part II), originally may have been less employed to convert outsiders to the new ideal than to inspire fellow members and keep their spirits high. After some time such groups may have become real members of the monks' order, at centres where one was prepared to tolerate their ideas. But as the term *śākya-bhikṣu*, occurring on donor inscriptions, suggests, they kept their identity<sup>25</sup>.

- 23 Cp. HIRAKAWA's (1963, p.83) quotation of the opening sentences of T.224, the oldest translation of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā*: "[...] The day was the 15th, the day of uposatha. The Buddha said to Subhūti: Today is the great assembly of bodhisattvas. so I shall teach the *prajñāpāramitā* to the various bodhisattvas."
- 24 HIRAKAWA 1963 p.79-84. With the exception of the *Avataṃsakasūtra*, which only has bodhisattvas as the audience, Mahāyāna *sūtras* normally mention monks and bodhisattvas, a few only monks. HIRAKAWA says on p.81: "[...], if the two [groups] had led a communal life in the same vihāra, they probably would not be mentioned separately."
- 25 A group of Mahāyāna lay adherents, called *paramopāsaka* and *paramopāsikā* seems to correspond to them. See SCHOPEN 1979; as to the first documents, see p.14: "[...] in the 4th century we begin to find references in Buddhist inscriptions to individuals referred to as *śākyabhikṣus* and *paramopāsakas*. In note 4 SCHOPEN mentions two articles by M. SHIZUTANI in *Indogaku Bukkyōgaku Kenkyū* 2 (1952) 104-5 and 19 (1962) 358-355. and H. SARKAR, *Studies in Early Buddhist architecture of India*, Delhi 1966, 106-7, where his findings were anticipated. In SCHOPEN 1987. p.120, the changes in the Mathūran Buddhist community between the end of the Kuṣān Period and the middle of the Gupta Period are described thus: "The changes at Mathurā were manifested — as they were elsewhere — by the appearance of Avalokiteśvara as a cult figure, by a decided drop in the number of lay donors — particularly women — and a corresponding rise in monk donors, by the sudden appearance of a specific group who called themselves *śākyabhikṣus*, and by the appearance of a very specific and characteristic donative formula." 'Sudden appearance' of course only refers to inscriptions. If the *śākyabhikṣus* represent the Mahāyāna *bhikṣus*, we must point to the fact that later chapters of the first Chinese translations of PraS (see below) testify to the existence of Mahāyāna monks in the second century C.E. (or even earlier). The name *śākyabhikṣu*, which is connected with Mahāyāna formulas on inscriptions, has perhaps something to do with the

Based on these assumptions we could say that the lay founders and protectors of the Buddha *stūpas*, and the lay persons who in early times were involved in the daily affairs of such *stūpas* were *instrumental* in bringing about this development.

The circles in which the idea of the imitation of the Buddha's career arose, i.e. in which the Mahāyāna *really began*, may in part have consisted of the successors of those persons. Another part might have consisted of common lay pilgrims, and a third part of travelling monks and nuns (or monks and nuns already living at such places and involved in the management of daily affairs).

As to the last group, it may have been against precepts of the path to release to listen to stories, but they would have been excused by the fact that the tales originally pointed to the roots of Gotama's ability to provide them with a path to release. Perhaps one of them was the person who first got the idea to propagate the imitation of Gotama's career. So one cannot say that it must have been a lay person. But monks and nuns are not the first persons to think of. At any rate, they were not the first who took up the idea; bodhisattvas are clearly distinguished from monks (and nuns) in the prologues of early Mahāyāna *sūtras* (see part II).

However, the collection of Jātakas of non-Mahāyāna schools could have originated from these traveller (or already resident) monks. The completed collection of Gāthās in the Pāli tradition contains a large number of ethically irrelevant fairy tales, giving the impression that the average monk or nun was more interested in dramatic and fabulous tales than in explanations of Gotama's superior qualities. Already the Bhārhut railings show this tendency. It corresponds to the, already considerable, influence of monks and nuns as attested by donor inscriptions found at this site. The emphasis on heroic deeds, which seems to characterize the first phase of the movement, rather points to a beginning of the Mahāyāna before the creation of the monuments of Bhārhut we know today than later.

While prominent lay believers must be considered to be the initiators of the cult of the Buddha *stūpas* and their supporting activities they also best qualify for having been the persons who for the first time got and tried to realize the idea of imitating Gotama's career. They were persons

emergence of the Buddha image. SARKAR (op. cit. p.106) says: "Like friar Bala these *Śākya-bhikṣus* were mainly interested in offering the image of Buddha to different Buddhist *saṅgha*."

As to keeping their identity, according to the *Kriyāsaṃgrahapañjikā* (BECHERT 1973,12) Mahāyānists undergo another formal act after the ordination as prescribed by the Nikāya.



capable of giving away wealth repeatedly (not only leaving their property to their family as the monks and nuns did), a practice which never appears as introduced to supersede another one.

That perhaps after some time many adherents of the movement chose to give away their possessions once for all, and eventually got absorbed in the monks' *saṅgha*, and that all Mahāyāna *sūtras* were then transmitted and adapted by monks is no argument against the laity's involvement in the rise of Mahāyāna.<sup>26</sup>

I would like to conclude this first part with two remarks, one regarding statistics, the other the relatively late appearance of the so-called Mahāyāna inscriptions.

First, statistics. Schopen (espec. 1984) has emphasized the relatively high number of inscriptions at *stūpa* sites announcing the gift of a monk or nun. He sometimes (espec. 1991) seems to suggest that monks and nuns are the real initiators of *stūpa* building and worship. I have already reacted to this, but not yet to statistics which might support the suggestion.

The percentages of donations of monks and nuns, as given in Schopen (1984, p.24-25), are indeed impressive. They show a rise from 40 in Bhārhut (around 100 B.C.E.) to over 50 in Mathurā and over 65 in Buddhist cave temples to over 70 in the so-called Mahāyāna inscriptions (of which the majority is rather late). However, if extrapolated, lay believers may originally have had a strong majority.

Second, the relatively late appearance of so-called Mahāyāna inscriptions. With one exception (see Schopen 1987) no allusions have been found to Mahāyāna in inscriptions before 300 C.E. This cannot mean

26 Females seem to have played no significant role in this incipient stage. With regard to the first *sūtras* translated into Chinese, HARRISON (1987, p.78) says: " If we attempt to sum up our findings on the status of women as far as these early Mahāyāna *sūtras* are concerned, we must conclude that although women, both lay and renunciant, are included as recipients of the new teaching on a theoretically equal footing with men, they are generally represented in such an unfavourable light as to vitiate any notion of the Mahāyāna as a movement for sexual equality." That there are theoretical elements in (early) Mahāyāna scriptures which could have changed attitudes and, at times, perhaps had such an effect has been shown in SCHUSTER 1981. Note that the latest Chinese translation (595 C.E.) of PraS represents a version which had eliminated the chapters on *bhikṣuṇīs* and *upāsikās* (see HARRISON PraS p.84 n.4). As SCHOPEN 1987, 131 n.50 remarks, referring to J. DANTINNE, *La splendeur de l'inébranlable* (Louvain-La-Neuve, 1983, 106-7), women have a conspicuous place in Akṣobhya's paradise Abhirati, but not in Sukhāvati.

that Mahāyāna didn't exist before 300 C.E. There is as yet no reason to distrust the general line of Chinese chronology which puts the earliest translations of its texts into the late second century C.E. The texts then translated suggest some development. Must we, then, not conclude that Mahāyāna did not arise in circles of *stūpa* worshippers? No, we mustn't.

Beginning stages of classical descriptions of a path may sometimes reproduce original thinking or behaviour. The classical description of the first stage of a bodhisattva's career in the *Daśabhūmikasūtra* speaks of the great giving up (*mahātyāga*) of [parts of] one's possessions (including servants and even wife and children) or of [parts of] one's body or one's life.<sup>27</sup> This reflects Jātaka motifs and had, at the time of the redaction of the sūtra<sup>28</sup>, perhaps become a literary theme inciting people to act

27 DaBhV 12,5 (DaBhR 24,13): [...] *mahātyāgeṣu prayujyate / sa ya ime tyāgāḥ — yad uta dhanadhānyakośakoṣṭhāgāraparityāgo vā hiraṇyasuvārṇa[...]parityāgo vā [...] dāsīdāsakarmakarapauruṣeyaparityāgo vā grāmanagaranigamajanapadarāṣṭrarājadhānīparityāgo vā bhāryāputraduhitṛparityāgo vā sarvapriyamanāpavastuparityāgo vā śīraḥkaṇṇanāsākaracaraṇanayanāsvamāṇṣaṣoṇitāsthimajjāmedaśchavīcarmahṛdayasarvātmabhāvaparityāgo vā /*

28 The *Daśabhūmikasūtra* as we have it today (including several translations into Chinese) seems to be no early Mahāyāna text. Many developments have already been integrated. But the idea of planes (*bhūmi*) of development of Gotama, and then of each person who wants to become a buddha, could be rather old, perhaps older than the system of six perfections, although in *Prajñāpāramitā* texts *bhūmis* seem to have been introduced only after the system of six *pāramitās* (see LETHCOE 1977, 275 n.S).

The *sūtra* represents a *bhūmi* tradition to which these perfections are appended. In order to have a *pāramitā* for each of the ten *bhūmis*, it adds four to the six well known ones.

But *dānapāramitā* is not as clearly associated with the first level as the other *pāramitās* are with the nine other levels. Maybe *dāna* was considered a word not always having the strong implication of giving away possessions and life, often simply meaning the liberality with which people supported the *saṅgha*.

There is, however, evidence of defining *dāna* in such a way that it fits the ideas of overachievers. In T.413, a Chinese translation of the Dharmadhātustava or -stotra, which is related to the *Daśabhūmika*, *dāna* is defined as various acts of difficult behaviour (p.791bS: *zhōng zhōng nán xíng shì*). With this one may compare what is said about the first *bhūmi* in the Mahāvastu by Har Dayal, p.273: "He gives away wealth, limbs, wife and children; he speaks sweetly to cruel men, who may have threatened to beat, bind or kill him."

The description of *dānapāramitā* in the Bodhisattvabhūmi includes both easy and difficult 'giving' (see Har Dayal pp.173-193). The recipients are no institutions, but one's family or others who are in need (BoBh 132,15-17). The wealth the



selflessly towards other living beings. The passage does not, however, imply that one should act in a selfless way towards institutions, however inspiring.

This does not imply that a *stūpa* was not supported by them. But we may assume that this was not worth mentioning, being normally a gift from one's abundance. If the initiators of Mahāyāna and their first successors were only half the overachievers the texts claim them to be, we must not expect to find early inscriptions announcing such acts as a means to their own or other persons' buddhahood (see Appendix Vessantara).

One may now ask why such inscriptions appear, with one exception, after 300 C.E. A gradual decline of the original heroism of a small group might be the correct answer. The *Lotus Sūtra* teaches that the wholesome roots (*kuśalamūla*, from which buddhahood arises) could also be planted by simple acts of worship e.g. of *stūpas*, open for everyone, monks and nuns, layman and laywoman, even children. The *Lotus Sūtra* is not likely to belong to the first layer of Mahāyāna scriptures. The parts preaching these acts of worship for becoming a buddha, though very likely already composed in the second century or earlier (Kubo 1987, Summary p.5), might have some relation with the emergence of Mahāyāna inscriptions in the 4th century.

## II

This part deals with the question which group initiated the *prajñāpāramitā*<sup>29</sup> as a method for attaining buddhahood. In all probability this happened *after* the real or intended heroism of the incipient stage and *before* the unheroic idea that building and worshipping a *stūpa* could be a means for buddhahood.

I was formerly convinced that monks had started this path to buddhahood. In the text which might be the nucleus of the literature called *Prajñāpāramitā*, the *first* chapter of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*

bodhisattva gives away "must be acquired righteously and peacefully" (Har Dayal p.175; BoBh 119,25: *dharmeṇa cāsāhasena bodhisattvo bhogaṃ saṃhr̥tya dānaṃ dadāti*). Having a family still and being able to acquire wealth again and again implies that the bodhisattva here described is a layman.

29 *Prajñāpāramitā* means perfection (*pāramitā*) of discriminating insight (*prajñā*) and implies the eventual destruction of all discriminations by means of discerning all things as empty (*śūnya*).

(henceforth: *Aṣṭa*)<sup>30</sup>, it is the *monk* Subhūti who introduces the most important tenets. But a recent study on compounds in the prologue of the *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā* (henceforth: *Pañca*) in Chinese, Sanskrit and Tibetan versions led me to change my view. Now I think the method originated in a circle of bodhisattvas who were in close contact with monks.

The main cause for this revision was the unqualified distinction between *bhikṣus* (monks) and *bodhisattvas*, met with in the earliest Chinese translations. This suggests that for the authors monks were no aspirants to the awakening of a buddha, and the aspirants to this awakening, the bodhisattvas, were no monks or not the real monks. It is true that in other early parallels of this passage monks are qualified as arhats, which would allow us to consider the bodhisattvas as non-arhat monks. But among the qualities attributed to the bodhisattvas there is none which points to life in a monastery.

Before I turn to the most important bodhisattva qualities in the prologue of the *Pañca*, let me make some remarks on the first chapter of the *Aṣṭa* which is likely to be the oldest (or one of the oldest) document(s) of *Prajñāpāramitā* literature.

A paragraph in the first chapter, represented in the first Chinese translation, would confirm the hypothesis that *prajñāpāramitā* was preceded by another method which was difficult and probably regarded as taking too much time<sup>31</sup>.

30 On the probability of this assumption see SCHMITHAUSEN 1977. The views of CONZE, HIKATA, KAJIYOSHI and LANCASTER are discussed there.

31 *Aṣṭa*V 14,9-IX (T.224 p.428b17-25) not only preserves traces of a difficult bodhisattva way, but also shows how, at some stage, preachers wanted to avoid discouraging people by emphasizing the difficulties. A person who practices the way should not think of himself as a bodhisattva who must be able to undergo sufferings for the sake of living beings (*sattvānāṃ kṛtaśo duḥkhāny utsahate pratyānubhavitum*); nor should one produce the notion "difficult" (*duṣkarasaṃjñā*). Instead one should produce the notion (*saṃjñā*) that all beings are one's mother, father, son or one's own self. In *Aṣṭa*V 14,23 (T.224 p.426b25) an advice appears which is a compromise between cultivating *saṃjñā*'s and the main method, *prajñāpāramitā*, which does not allow to consider persons or their constituents as existing. The compromise is: one should regard all internal and external *dharma*s as 'not existing'; then one will not have the idea that anything is difficult. Without compromise the advice would have been: one should not regard internal or external *dharma*s as existing; one should not produce any ideas. Cp. the uncompromising admonition to avoid *nimitta* in *Aṣṭa*V 6,15 ff., T.224 p.426c3 ff.; but it ends with

Let us now look at the prologue of the *Aṣṭa*. The Nepalese manuscripts collated by Rajendralal Mitra at the end of the 19th century all start with mentioning an audience of 1250 monks, all Arhats, with the exception of Ānanda. No bodhisattvas or other beings are said to have listened to the dialogues on bodhisattvas contained in the *Aṣṭa*.

1250 monks is modest compared with the numbers of monks and bodhisattvas and celestial beings mentioned in the prologues of other Mahāyāna *sūtras*. It suggests antiquity and an origin in a circle of monks without other people participating.

However, the first Chinese translation made by Lokakṣema in 179-180 C.E. (PL p.46) mentions an audience of innumerable monks, headed by Śāriputra and Subhūti, *and* of innumerable bodhisattvas, headed by Maitreya and Mañjuśrī. The monks are *not* called arhats, nor are the bodhisattvas characterized. The prologue of the second Chinese translation known to us, dated 225 C.E., mentions innumerable monks and innumerable bodhisattvas. Here, too, no qualities are attributed to monks or bodhisattvas.

From the late fourth century onwards, in the *Aṣṭa* translations of Dharmapriya, Kumārajīva, Hsüan tsang and Dānapāla the bodhisattvas are, as in the Nepalese manuscripts, no part of the audience. An exception is a second translation directed by Hsüan tsang. In conformity with the two earliest Chinese translations it mentions an audience of monks and bodhisattvas, but the monks are briefly characterized as arhats and the bodhisattvas as possessing unimpeded eloquence.

How can one explain these observations? It is true that early Chinese translators enjoyed some freedom in adding or omitting things. It is possible that the first translators of the *Aṣṭa* had a (hybrid) Sanskrit or Prakrit text before them that spoke of 1250 monks and that *they* changed it into innumerable monks and innumerable bodhisattvas. But that Hsüan tsang in the 7th century felt compelled to order a second translation, points to another Sanskrit or Prakrit manuscript tradition with a different introduction. So it is more likely that the early translators of the *Aṣṭa* had at their disposal a manuscript of this tradition which spoke of (innumerable) monks and bodhisattvas.

the promise of a *samādhi* which speedily leads to a Buddha's awakening, which in this context, can only be an aim in the interest of other persons. The promise of speed seems to imply that the heroic method was thought to take too much time: *Aṣṭa*V 7,1213 (T.224 p.426c20-21): *anena samādhinā* [see line 11: *sarvadharmā-nupādāna nāma samādhir bodhisattvasya*] *viharan bodhisattvo mahāsattvaḥ kṣi-pram anuttarāṃ samyaksaṃbodhim abhisambudhyate*.

That 1250 arhat monks, who, in *Prajñāpāramitā* literature, by definition cannot be concerned with becoming a buddha, are the *only* audience must then be considered a later development, which need not be discussed here. What needs discussion is the fact that in the older versions, besides and before the bodhisattvas, monks are mentioned who seem to be excluded from the bodhisattva way by the very distinction between monks and bodhisattvas.

Perhaps this was an attempt at convincing monks to take the new ideal seriously. Monks would not have denied that the Buddha sometimes spoke to non-monks. But they were not obliged to listen to such a sermon. Saying that a sermon also and in the first place was meant for the monks might have had the effect to get monks interested in the new *sūtras* and perhaps converted to the new ideal. Conversion could have implied influence on the affairs of a *stūpa* centre which at that time very likely were under the monks' control.

That the monk Subhūti is the person who, addressing the Buddha and Śāriputra, pronounces the best ideas in the first chapter, may also be a fiction with that purpose. Monks could thereby see that in ancient times a monk existed who was wiser than their protagonist Śāriputra, the first of the Buddha's traditional disciples.

Moreover, the method for buddhahood called *prajñāpāramitā* is likely to have been formed after a new method of monks for a direct experience of release (Vetter 1984, 499 ff.). Mentioning an audience of monks before bodhisattvas and employing Subhūti as a speaker on bodhisattva methods could also have been an expression of fruitful contacts.

Let us now look at the prologue of the *Pañca*. In all its versions (4 Chinese, 2 Sanskrit and 2 Tibetan) innumerable monks and bodhisattvas are said to have been present. The bodhisattvas have such qualities as to characterize them as recipients of the message, while the monks are said to be arhats who had entirely fulfilled their task.

The qualities attributed to the bodhisattvas in the *Pañca* have been expanded from a list of 32 in the first Chinese translations via 37 in the tradition which has survived in Nepalese Sanskrit manuscripts and in the Tanjur, to 62 in a Gilgit manuscript and 65 in the Kanjur. In the first stages of this development the bodhisattvas have nothing in common with the monks.<sup>32</sup> It was obviously considered irrelevant, if not counterproductive,

32 See VETTER 1993, p.51 ff. In the less expanded versions (including the Tanjur translation) monks and bodhisattvas have nothing in common. Later, as we may

that a bodhisattva was free from defilements leading to rebirth. What then characterized bodhisattvas according to the *Pañca* prologue? I shall indicate only two features, *dhāraṇī* and *samādhi*.<sup>33</sup>

The first quality attributed to bodhisattvas is: they are *dhāraṇīpratilabdha*, have obtained *dhāraṇī*. What is meant by *dhāraṇī* in this context? In early Mahāyāna it seems to have been a word or sentence which was chosen for its rhythm and sound value and given a deep meaning to which one had to accustom oneself. A person who was fully accustomed, was a master of such a *dhāraṇī*, and is likely to have expected that its utterance pervaded him with the meaning even in situations where it was difficult to contemplate (see Appendix Dhāraṇī). This quality could refer to a less protected life than that of a monk or nun. Its position at the start of the list points to an early stage of the bodhisattva group.

The second feature, *samādhi*, is closely related to the first, but its explication in three following predicates seems to point, if not to integration into the *saṅgha*, at least to its influence. The bodhisattvas who are said to have obtained *samādhis* are further described as "diverting themselves with emptiness" (*śūnyatāvihārin*), "having signlessness as their sphere" (*ānimittagocara*) and "having unproduced vows" (Gilgit manuscript: *akalpitaṇḍa*).

<sup>34</sup> The explanation corresponds to a trinity of terms otherwise known as the three gateways to emancipation (*vimokṣasamukhāni*) which probably were considered to lead to a *nirvāṇa* that can be experienced here and

assume, in the Gilgit manuscript (and in the Kanjur translation) the bodhisattvas are said to have been freed from the defilements (nos.24 and 47 of the Gilgit list) and from the fetters (nr.51) which corresponds with two paraphrases of arhatship (*niṣkleśa* and *parikṣṇabhavaśaṇḍojana*) in all versions. In the 24th chapter of the *Bhadrāpālasūtra* (HARRISON PraS p.196) freedom of defilements appears in the context of a description of bodhisattvas; but as one can see in the concordance in Paul HARRISON's edition of *The Tibetan text of the Pratyutpanna-Buddha-Saṃmukhāvasthita-Samādhi-sūtra* (Tokyo: The Reiyukai Library, 1978, p.235) these passages do not appear in the Chinese versions.

33 Other attributes are discussed in VETTER 1993, p.68 ff.

34 For this paragraph I base myself on VETTER 1984, p.499 ff. Details have to be further investigated as has been done by DE BREET 1992.



now<sup>35</sup>. Presumably all things first were penetrated as empty; their signs (*nimitta*) then no longer appeared, so that they were no longer perceived. Then all aspirations ceased. Passages in the first chapter of the *Aṣṭa* suggest that these gateways to emancipation were, under the name *prajñāpāramitā*, adapted to the way of bodhisattvas who before seem to have solely depended on the heroic accumulation of merit (to be dedicated to buddhahood).

The gateways were obviously considered as a means that could speed up supreme awakening, but also as dangerous. To avoid immediate *nirvāṇa* precluding further development to buddhahood they had to be handled carefully, in measured doses, which is called skill in means (*upāyakauśalya*) in the *Aṣṭa*.

The third gateway (being without aspirations, *apraṇihita*) had now either to be dropped, as is the case at many places in the *Aṣṭa*, or modified as happens in the *Pañca* prologue: the bodhisattvas "have unproduced vows" (*akalpita-praṇidhāna*). As later in the list the bodhisattvas are said to have their vows well activated for innumerable aeons, "unproduced vows" could be interpreted as "having vows which have got a spontaneous or natural existence", so that one need not fear to lose them in such states of meditation. Or it may mean that in bodhisattvas egoistic wishes with regard to rebirth no longer are produced. So much for bodhisattva qualities in the *Pañca* prologue.

If I thus situate the origin of *prajñāpāramitā* as a means for buddhahood in a group of bodhisattvas associated with monks and a monastery, I do not exclude its effect on persons and groups not associated with monasteries. The *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa* seems to be the result of such an effect. In the context of our problem its sociological message seems to be: If it is now, with *prajñāpāramitā*, so much easier to be a bodhisattva, you need not even renounce your wealth. Lay believers may rely on this *sūtra* as authorizing them to be teaching bodhisattvas and remain rich householders. But most of the Indo-Tibetan tradition has judged this a too optimistic approach. To the questions of origin the text has little to contribute; it only develops some ideas.

Chapters at the end of the *Aṣṭa* seem to belong to the same category. That the bodhisattva Prince Dharmodgata is an expert in *prajñāpāramitā*

35 And also to express the state immediately after such an experience. Cp. M I 302,20: *Saññāvedayitanirodhasamāpattiyā vuṭṭhitaṃ kho āvuso Visākha bhikkhum tayo phassā phussanti: suññato phasso, animitto phasso, appaṇihito phasso ti.*



and at the same time enjoys life together with 68,000 women may serve as a document of a layman's wishful thinking, but not of the history of ideas.

However, the special form, linked to *prajñāpāramitā*, of the practice of keeping in mind (*anusmṛti*) the Buddha(s) of the present, as transmitted in the *Pratyutpannabuddhasaṃmukhāvasthasamādhisūtra* (PraS)<sup>36</sup> could well be a new lay initiative, though it has been preserved and developed in a monastic environment. For it is difficult to explain the prologue of the *sūtra* and the central position of the householder Bhadrāpāla, if one assumes that this *samādhi* was originally meant for monks and nuns.<sup>37</sup>

36 The *sūtra* of the Samādhi of direct encounter with the Buddhas of the present. It was translated into Chinese already in the late second century. Paul HARRISON has edited the Tibetan text in 1978 (Tokyo, The Reiyukai Library), and published an annotated English translation with several appendices relating to the history of the text in 1990 (HARRISON PraS); the following indications of its content are given in the words of his translation. HARRISON 1978 had already presented an analysis of the principal ideas and practices of the text. The analysis shows that an early version of the Sukhāvatīvyūha was known to the author(s) of PraS. But its ideal of rebirth in the paradise of Sukhāvatī is not accepted; "the goal of the good bodhisattva is nothing short of Buddhahood" (p.52). And the early Pure Land depiction of the encounter with Amitābha as an actual event is criticized: by thought is the Buddha produced and by thought alone he is seen (p.48, HARRISON PraS p.43).

These remarks show that Pure Land Buddhism is a relatively old movement, but, as it appears here, does not participate in the early Mahāyāna striving for buddhahood as described by HARRISON 1987. Amitābha worship reflects, however, this striving, as soon as, in inscriptions, the idea appears that one wants to contribute to all living beings' unexcelled knowledge, as is already the case in the inscription on the Kuṣāṇ image of Amitābha described in SCHOPEN 1987. Before that time Amitābha worship could have had a loose doctrinal relation with Mahāyāna, in so far as the belief in the power of Amitābha /Amitāyus to create a paradise and to transfer people to it, seems to depend on ideas about different causes for buddhahood. Early Mahāyānists soon thought that it must be possible to employ means which were more effective than the means used by Śākyamuni according to the Jātakas. A world could then be better transformed than Gotama had done with our world, which was still full of wars and other evils. It became imaginable that a thoroughly 'pure' realm could be established.

37 The reader who feels unhappy with this conclusion may find some solace in WILLIAMS 1989, p.23. Discussing the question of the lay origin he says, referring to a statement by VAN BUITENEN who denies a strain of *kṣatriya* thought in Indian philosophy: "New thought might identify itself as 'new' by calling itself non-monastic, i.e. not in line with those hidebound orthodox monks who could think only old thoughts." It may be so in some cases. But as a general rule it would only

Even when in later chapters monks appear as its preservers in the last age they are never said to be the original addressees of the message.

The prologue says that the Lord was staying at Rājagṛha together with a great assembly of five hundred *bhikṣus*, all arhats who had accomplished their task. On that occasion the bodhisattva Bhadrapāla, in order to hear the Dharma, had come out from Rājagṛha along with 500 bodhisattvas who were all householders and upholders of the five rules of training.<sup>38</sup> Bhadrapāla is the person to whom all teachings are addressed in this *sūtra*. The main theme is the *samādhi* of direct encounter as a means for attaining buddhahood. It must be practiced in solitude and can only function as such a means, if the buddhas appearing in it are not taken as real entities.

From the start bodhisattvas are the persons whose behaviour is prescribed. In chapter 3 (B) it is said that bodhisattvas, whether they be householders or renunciants, should go to a secluded spot and concentrate their thoughts on Amitāyus. In chapter 5 (A) for the first time a *bhikṣu* appears as part of a precept: bodhisattvas who desire this *samādhi* should have respect for the *bhikṣu* who preaches the Dharma. It is not clear whether this Dharma is identical with the message of the *sūtra*. However, in chapter 6 (D) a prophecy appears that in some future time (and that is likely to be the time when this paragraph was written) *bhikṣus* and bodhisattvas who are deficient in morality and wisdom will not listen, when they hear this *samādhi* expounded. Here it is not only clear that other bodhisattvas followed other ways, but also that the bodhisattvas of this movement tried to convert monks. Sometimes they succeeded, as can be learnt from par.G. of chapter 6. But the *bhikṣus* and bodhisattvas who reject the message say among themselves (par.E): '... Sūtras like this are fabrications, they are poetic inventions; they were not spoken by the Buddha, nor were they

be convincing if history showed that lay people at no place and time have ever taken initiatives in religious affairs and, moreover, that monks (or brahmins or theologians) always have introduced new ideas as the product of outsiders.

38 I assume that this was the original setting. But the first chapter then says that the 500 *bhikṣus* joined the householders in order to listen to the Buddha. Śāriputra and Maudgalyāyana also arrived. By magic the *bhikṣus* of all regions also appeared, together 100.000. In the same way 30.000 *bhikṣuṇīs* arrived, and 28.000 Licchavi youths from Vaiśālī, 28.000 persons from Campā, 28.000 from Vārāṇasī, 28.000 from Kapilavastu, 28.000 from Śrāvastī, 28.000 from Kauśāmbī, 28.000 from Sāketa, 30.000 from Rājagṛha (already mentioned!); the Four Great Kings and many hundred thousand *koṭṭinīyutas* of other *devas* and similar numbers of other groups of non-human beings.

authorised by the Buddha!'. And in par.H, where monks appear as accepting and perhaps also teaching the *sūtra*, their critics say among themselves (i.e. not in the face of the censured persons): 'These *bhikṣus* have a real nerve ... that they should give the name *sūtra* to something which was not spoken by the Buddha, which is a poetic invention of their own fabrication ...'.<sup>39</sup>

In chapter 9 *bhikṣus* return in the discussion. The question here is what kind of instruction the bodhisattvas should receive who have gone forth from the household life and desire this *samādhi*. They should be pure in morality. The term *prātimokṣa* in par.A indicates monastic discipline, but par.H says that these bodhisattvas should enjoy the forest and take no pleasure in inhabited regions; they should practice the *dhūta-guṇas* (par.M v.1). In par.E-G the term *bhikṣu* appears: one should evince joy and respect and evoke the apperception of Teacher towards the *bhikṣus* who teach such dharma as these.

Chapter 10 deals with *bhikṣuṇīs* who have set out in the Mahāyāna (not represented in the latest Chinese translation, 595 C.E.). Chapter 11 indicates, obviously from a monastic point of view, what householder bodhisattvas have to do, including the advice to *go forth*. Chapter 12 deals, from the same point of view, with laywomen (also not represented in the latest Chinese translation).

This is only to show how monks (and nuns) become more conspicuous in later chapters. I shall not continue this survey, but conclude with a curious prophecy in chapter 13. In par.B the Buddha says: for forty years after my Parinirvāṇa this *samādhi* will circulate in Jambudvīpa. Thereafter it will go into a cave in the ground. When the last five centuries, the ruin of the True Dharma, occur, a few beings will appear who have purified their wholesome potentialities, and for the benefit of such beings, by the might of the Buddha, this *samādhi* will circulate in Jambudvīpa. The verses (par.K) say that the eight leaders of the laity headed by Bhadrapāla will write down what the Buddha said about the *samādhi* of direct encounter. Before they die they will put the *sūtra* in a *stūpa*, under rocks, etc. and make a resolve to recover it in the last period of the present buddhist teaching. At that time the eight leaders of householders will have been re-

39 The (secret) accusation that it is an invention of *those monks' own* fabrication gives WILLIAMS (1989, p.24) some right to quote these two paragraphs in a context where he wants to express his conviction that early Mahāyāna was a monastic movement, but not the context of the paragraphs.

born and become eight monks who are accompanied by a retinue of like-minded monks, nuns, laymen and women.

This prophecy is likely to be the product of a monastic writer. It shows that the *samādhi* was now practiced by monks, who were convinced that it could better be realized in a monastery. But that a monk should point in such a story to lay believers as the original receivers of the message makes no sense, if one assumes that the monks considered themselves as always having been in possession of this message. There existed obviously a tradition of another origin which was so strong that it could not be ignored at the time. The text also suggests that in some monasteries adherents of different movements lived together, avoiding discussing their differences (between mainstream and Mahāyāna, and within Mahāyāna itself) openly. The date of the first Chinese translation of PraS implies that this was so in the 2nd century C.E. or even earlier.

## Appendix: Cult of the Book

Passages discussed by Gregory Schopen, The Phrase '*sa pr̥thivīpradeśaś caityabhūto bhavet*' in the *Vajracchedikā*: Notes on the Cult of the Book, IJ17 (1975) 147-181, show that Mahāyāna scriptures were sometimes said to be more worth worshipping than relics. The article is admirable in its diligent comparison of some passages. It shows the importance of the matter and invites further investigation.

However, the historical remarks at the end (p.180) are questionable. Schopen says that his findings do not support Hirakawa's conclusions about the *stūpa* as the institutional basis from which Mahāyāna arose. In my view, the context of the quoted passages and their (partial) absence in early Chinese versions rather do not support Schopen's assumption that in Mahāyāna the cult of the book precedes the cult of the *stūpa*.

Let me begin with the context of the phrase mentioned in the title, occurring in Edward Conze's edition (Serie Orientale Roma XIII, 1957) of the *Vajracchedikā Prajñāpāramitā* on p.37,13; and as *caityabhūta[ḥ] sa pr̥thivīpradeśo bhaviṣyati* on p.44, 17 [the latter can also be found in Schopen's edition of "The Manuscript of the *Vajracchedikā* Found at Gilgit", in: L.O. Gomez and J.A. Silk, *Studies in the Literature of the Great Vehicle*, Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan, 1989, p.101,21.] Both paragraphs are represented in the first Chinese translation, directed by Kumārajīva in 402 C.E.(ConzePL p.60), T.235 p.750a6 ff. and c7 ff.

The paragraph in which the first phrase occurs states (in the words of Conze's translation, op.cit.p.74): more merit can be begotten from taking up but one stanza from this discourse on dharma and teaching it than from giving whole world systems filled with jewels to the Tathāgatas, not to speak of taking up the whole discourse and teaching it; the place of earth where such taking up and teaching occurs is like, or has become, a *caitya* (T.235 p.750a7-8: is *like* a Buddha's *stūpa*).

The paragraph in which the second phrase occurs says that more merit can be acquired from not rejecting this discourse on dharma after hearing it than from giving up one's life again and again, not to speak of writing, mastering and teaching this discourse; the place of earth where this *sūtra* will be revealed, will be like, or: become, a *caitya* (T.235 p.750c22: *become a stūpa*).

Both paragraphs distance an older bodhisattva method by means of its terminology: by dealing with *prajñāpāramitā* qualified persons (see ed. Conze p.44,8 -13: *na hi śakyaṃ ... hīna-adhimuktaiḥ ...*) can acquire more



merit (to be dedicated to buddhahood) than by giving up possessions and life. Writing is mentioned in the second paragraph, but no cult of the book or the *stūpa* appears. Dealing with *prajñāpāramitā* in whatever manner makes the place where this happens as holy as a *caitya* (a *stūpa* reminding of the Buddha's life or containing a relic?).

An explicit opposition between the cult of the book and the cult of relics can be found in the second passage mentioned by Schopen, in the Sanskrittext of the *Aṣṭa* as we have it today in Nepalese manuscripts (*Aṣṭa*V 28,10-29,27). It employs the *Vajracchedikā* phrase mentioned in the title. This however does not mean, as Schopen seems to think, that the passage was written to interpret the meaning of the phrase and therefore must be later. None of the corresponding passages in the early Chinese translations of the *Aṣṭa*, T.224, 225, 226, 227 (vol.8, p.431 c22 ff., 484a4 ff., 514b3 ff., 542 b9 ff.), reflects a Sanskrit text containing the phrase *prthivīpra-deśaś caityabhūto bhavet* or the word *caitya*. Only in Hsüan Tsang's 7th century translations, T.220.4 and 5 and in the 10th century T.228 (vol.7 p.774 c 11 and p.873 bl 2; vol.8 p.595c27) the passage *Aṣṭa*V 28,25 f., where the *Vajracchedikā* phrase appears, is reflected, while still nothing can be found corresponding to *caityabhūta* in *Aṣṭa*V 29,17. On such a basis there is no reason to alter the scheme of development of *Prajñāpāramitā* texts given in ConzePL.

However, the older Chinese translations of the passage in the *Aṣṭa* are as such worth attention. Its late second century C.E. version in T.224 is the oldest document on the subject which can be culled from Schopen's article. Another passage quoted by Schopen (p.157) which could also be considered rather old, para.160 of the *Kāśyapaparivarta* in Staël-Holstein's Edition (Shanghai 1926), is not represented in the first (late second century C.E.) Chinese translation and hardly of the same period.

T.224 p.431 c22-432a26, the oldest version of *Aṣṭa*V 28,10-29,27, is, despite difficulties in details, clear in its structure; clearer than the Sanskrit passage, which is sometimes senselessly enlarged. It can be divided into two paragraphs.

The first (c22-aS) shows there already existed a written form of the text, but it was not in high esteem. In p.431c22-24 it is indicated that there are persons who are not able to study and recite the text orally (and, consequently, do not attain the results announced in the preceding passages). Such persons should hold a book containing the *Prajñāpāramitā* (in their hands?). Then they will not be injured by men or ghosts, except for those who have done sins in former lives (in other words: if someone is



nevertheless injured, it can be explained by his or her evil deeds in former lives).

Those who hold the written text are like persons who for the purpose of protection have taken refuge in the place where the Buddha first attained awakening. In the conclusion (a2-5) the comparison shifts from a person holding the book to a place where the *Prajñāpāramitā* rests; it should be venerated (but it is not called a *caitya* or compared with a *caitya*).

The second paragraph (a5-26 [~*AṣṭaV* 28,29-271]) shows that propaganda for *prajñāpāramitā* has already reached such hyperbolic dimensions that venerating its written form (which was said to be for persons not able to deal with it otherwise) is considered to give higher merit than venerating a *stūpa* with relics of the Buddha (a5-10). A reason is given: The Tathāgata as a manifestation of omniscience (not as possessing the 32 marks of a Great Man) could only come into existence by *prajñāpāramitā*. *Prajñāpāramitā* as the cause of this manifestation is, in the form of a book, more important than the remains of his body.

The persons addressed are *kulaputras* and *kuladuhitṛs* as in preceding sections where they represent the bodhisattvas of other chapters. But in this paragraph they are rather persons only sympathizing with their career. The merit they can acquire through book worship is said to be greater than the merit others can accumulate through *stūpa* worship.

A motive<sup>40</sup> behind these two T.224 paragraphs could have been propaganda for a place or places neither famous in connection with Gotama's life nor in connection with a part of his bodily remains, but being in want of pilgrims' support, perhaps for proliferating *prajñāpāramitā*. The written form of this teaching is said to protect against men and ghosts as efficiently as the place where the Buddha attained awakening. Being a manifestation of what is claimed to be the immediate cause of Gotama's awakening, it can be said to have a closer relation to the Buddha's real nature than the relics of his physical body.

40 For "buddhological" motives see Yuichi KAJIYAMA, "Stūpas, the Mother of Buddhas, and Dharma body", in: A.K. WARDER ed., *New Paths in Buddhist Research*, Durham North Carolina: The Acom Press, 1984, pp.9-16 [= Y. KAJIYAMA, *Studies in Buddhist Philosophy (Selected Papers)* ed. by Katsumi MIMAKI et al. Kyoto: Rinsen Book Co., 1989, pp.45-52]. Kajiya refers (p.13) to Lewis R. LANCASTER, *The Oldest Mahāyāna Sutra: its Significance for the Study of Buddhist Development*, Eastern Buddhist, New Series, VIII no.1, 1975, pp.30-41. See also HARRISON 1992 p.47 ff.

If such a motive may be assumed, it could imply that the adherents of what we may call the mystical way, i.e. *prajñāpāramitā*, were not, or not sufficiently, backed by traditional centres of pilgrimage. The T.224 passage could then also reflect a dissent on methods leading to buddhahood, some relic *stūpas* still supporting the heroic ideal of giving up possessions and life, not yet recognizing attempts at integrating this ideal into *prajñāpāramitā*, e.g. as the first of six *pāramitās* of which *prajñā* is the last and most important.

The paragraphs in the *Vajracchedikā* sketched above directly refer to a substitution of the heroic method for attaining buddhahood by *prajñāpāramitā*. The idea of a substitution of methods could be older than the propaganda for places with a *Prajñāpāramitā* book. But this need not imply that the *Vajracchedikā* as a composition is older. Texts can contain old and new ideas.

Finally, a remark on the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīkasūtra* (SP). Being a composition with strong synthetic, or syncretic, aspects, it is not likely to belong to the first layer of Mahāyāna scriptures. This is confirmed by the fact that no second or early third century Chinese translations are known to have existed; the first translations that survived, T.263 and the partial one T.265, were made at the end of the third century C.E. (see W. Baruch, *Beiträge zum Saddharmapuṇḍarīkasūtra*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1938, p.29 ff.). Hirakawa (1990, 283) may be right that the chapter on "Skill in Means", which today is the second chapter, is the earliest part of the text. But that this chapter should date (in its entirety?) from before the second century C.E. is doubtful. Then it is very probable, if not certain, that the nuclei of other *sūtras* existed even earlier.

Such a *sūtra* should play only an indirect role in a discussion about the origin of Mahāyāna. I can, therefore, not follow Hirakawa in indiscriminately quoting passages from SP as testimonies for ideas about the origin of the Great Vehicle. But part of these ideas would stand the test of application to older material. Certain SP passages appear to reflect an older tradition. To this tradition seems to belong that the *stūpa* is an important centre of ideas and activities (Hirakawa 1963, 85-90). Even if in SP by the word *stūpa* no relic *stūpas*, but only book *stūpas* were meant (which is against textual evidence), it would show that buddhist movements existed, at least at the time of the composition of the SP, which had non-monastic centres.

The four passages, quoted by Schopen (p.163-167), commending the erection of a *stūpa* at places where the *sūtra* was preached or written down, and saying that one need not add relics, cannot claim antiquity, not

even within the SP tradition. They do not appear before the tenth chapter, while relics are expressly mentioned in the first and second chapter (see SPV p.18,13; 34,19; 36,3.20.21 [KN 26; 50-52]; SPT p.29 f.57a1, 58a4; p.30 f.59 b3; cf. Dharmarakṣa's late 3rd century translation, T.263 p.67 b13; p.71a21, b4.22, c3.13). If the first part of SP represents, as Rawlinson assumes (see above), the oldest layer within the SP tradition, we could not only presume analogy, but also a sort of continuation of the cult of relics as it is indicated in passages of the Mahāparinirvāṇa tradition.

We must, however, be aware of what is new in the *sūtra*'s dealing with *stūpas*, even at places which could represent its oldest layer. The intention that underlies the composition and compilation of SP seems to be to make the bodhisattva career accessible for everyone, and no longer to leave it to persons who, maybe on account of their *kṣatriya* education, did not recoil from the idea of self-sacrifice, or to others who, maybe on account of a special environment and training, had access to mystical or visionary experiences. Though showing respect for such means for buddhahood, SP also mentions easier means, avoiding to call them preliminary and thereby discourage people.<sup>41</sup>

Among the easier methods for bodhisattvas building and worshipping *stūpas* are mentioned (especially in the 2nd chapter). It could have been the first time that such common buddhist activities were called a means for attaining buddhahood. Incidentally, preaching the *sūtra*, propagated especially in the tenth chapter, may also be reckoned among easier methods; but this practice also has heroic aspects, e.g. when someone promises to carry on preaching despite threats for health and life (SPV 162,9 [KN 267]; SPT p.131 f.256b4; T.263 p.106b5-6).

The SP passages mentioned by Schopen (p.163-167) as testimony for book worship directly or indirectly say that relics are not needed, when a *stūpa* is built at a place where SP is studied or is present in the form of a book; the *sūtra* represents the real nature of the Tathāgata. This is reminiscent of the *Aṣṭa* passage discussed above. It not only reveals that one now wanted to keep SP in similar or even higher esteem, but it could also imply that the SP preaching had spread to places and regions where no

41 For modern sects based on SP, such as Reiyukai, it is important that the easier means sometimes, in later passages, are called to be the better means. They can refer to these passages in order to avoid the troublesome demand for perfection implied in the mentioning of traditional bodhisattva practices. See KUBO 1993, espec. 122-127, where two of the passages quoted by Schopen form the main ground for the argument.

relics as a centre of worship were available. This seems to be a better explanation than assuming that such remarks wanted to keep the relic cult at a distance.

I want to conclude with a few remarks on two excerpts from a paragraph in the 17th chapter of SP (SPV 201,22-26 and 202,6-8 [KN 338-339]; SPT p.160-161 f.324b6-325a7 and 326b6-327a2; cf. T.263 p.117a9 ff.) quoted (not translated) by Schopen in footnote 37 (p.167). It is the only paragraph of his whole collection which nearly justifies his exaggerated statement (p. 180) that *most* of the passages show an unambiguously negative attitude to the *stūpa* cult.

The first excerpt says: the *kulaputra* and *kuladhitr* who preserves (? *aṃsena pariharati*)<sup>42</sup> this discourse on dharma in the form of a book preserves (? *pariharati*) the Tathāgata and need not build *stūpas* for me, or monasteries, or support the order of monks; because he has already venerated my relics and built *stūpas* of seven kinds of jewels. The second excerpt says: The person who studies and teaches and writes this discourse on dharma after my parinirvāṇa need not erect *stūpas* for my relics nor revere the order of monks.

These are important, but relatively late passages for the the cult of the book. The intention seems to be: being an eager student of the *sūtra*, one need not be afraid if one cannot fulfil the normal tasks of a lay believer.

42 In the above mentioned edition of the Gilgit manuscript of the *Vajracchedikā* Schopen translates the clause *mamāṃsena* [ed.Conze p.44: *..samāṃsena!*] *bodhiṃ dhārayiṣyanti* of Folio 7a1(p.100) with "will carry my awakening on their shoulder" (p.124) and suggests in note 9 (p.135) that this implies an equation between preserving some form of the doctrine and preserving the awakening of the Buddha. The reading of the Gilgit manuscript and the literal and metaphorical meanings are confirmed by Kumārajīva who employs (T.235 p.750c17) two characters, hē-tān, signifying 'carry on one's shoulder' with the connotations of responsibility or gratitude (see Mathew's *Chinese-English Dictionary*). According to PW *pariharati* can mean 'herumtragen'. Because of the similarity of the two passages *aṃsena pariharati* possibly also means 'carries on his shoulder' and/or 'preserves'. The metaphorical meaning seems to be most needed. With regard to the Tathāgata one could also imagine the meaning 'honors', which would suit the discourse on dharma as well, and be in agreement with a similar place in SPV 70,18 [KN 99], where the clause *mūrdhani dhārayeta* seems to have, according to T.263 p.79c24 (using characters for 'to kotow'), the meaning 'to honor'. This metaphorical meaning and the change between shoulder and head could perhaps be derived from the story (see LamotteH p.69) of the elephant who bears a monkey on his head who bears a pheasant on his shoulder.



Studying and worshipping the *sūtra* is more and contains them. But the other tasks are not forbidden. So even this paragraph is in fact no proof for an unambiguously negative attitude to the *stūpa* cult.

And it is obviously a late paragraph in SP. It occurs in a late chapter (ch.16 in SPV); the point in question does not appear in the *geya*, as Hirakawa (1963, p.87) already has remarked, and the clauses containing *pariharati* and 'the discourse in form of a book' are not represented in the first Chinese translation (T.263 p.117a10).

### Appendix: Dhāraṇi

In interpreting *dhāraṇī* I go a step further than Braarvig 1985, but depend on the passages he quotes (especially Bobh pp.272-3) and on most of his conclusions. By Mahāyānists it was probably first used in the meaning 'means to call to and keep in memory', not 'magical formula' (see also Hirakawa 1990 p.301). Braarvig's article focusses on the relation between *dhāraṇī* and *pratibhāna* ('eloquence'), not conspicuous in the *Pañca* list. The relation between *dhāraṇī* and *samādhi*, visible in the list, is also referred to by him, but gets less attention. In order to explain it I introduce two elements not mentioned in the sources, but observable in *dhāraṇīs*: rhythm and repetition of sounds. They seem to be more important than "etymology", though the latter may have played a role, e.g. in *īṇe mīṇe dapphe dadapphe*, the formula for the four noble truths discussed in Bernhard 1967. A third element I introduce is more speculative: practitioners probably believed that uttering rhythmical words and sentences with a special sound pattern would help to reach *samādhi* provided they had or were given a meaning conducive to such a state. Compare the fifth of the famous propositions of Mahādeva (Lamotte H p.301: "[...] 'Oh, douleur', et ce cri peut être considéré comme un artifice destiné à provoquer l'apparition du Chemin.").

The *dhāraṇīpādāni* and *mantrapadāni* which can be found in SP (chapters 21 and 26 SPV) and *Laṅkāvatārasūtra* (chapter 9, ed. B. Nanjio p.260) already suggest a magical use. J.W. Hauer (Die Dharaṇi im nördlichen Buddhismus und ihre Parallelen in der sogenannten Mithrasliturgie, Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1927) took these texts as his starting point, but had difficulties to combine their magical use with what he assumed was another function: "Meditationsstütze" (p.5). However, if we keep to the *Pañca*, they seem to be only a means for memory and meditation. In N. Dutt's edition (London 1934, p. 212) some examples of *dhāraṇīs* with explanation can be found, the first being *Arapacana*,



presumably the first five syllables of a foreign alphabet; see Lamotte H p.549, referring to articles by S. Lévi and St. Konow; see also Brough 1977, where has been shown that Dharmarakṣa's [308 C.E.] Chinese translation of the *Lalitavistara* reflects, in the tenth chapter, the *Arapacana* syllabary, which in the Sanskrit text now available and in the second Chinese translation [683 C.E.] is replaced by the Sanskrit syllabary; on the Gāndhārī origin of the syllabary see Salomon 1990.

The *Pañca* says that the first syllable of *Arapacana*, A, is uttered because from the very beginning no *dharma* has ever arisen (*sarvadharmāṇām ādyanutpannatvāt*), the second syllable, Ra because all *dharma*s are devoid of stains (*rajo'pagatatvāt*), and so on. The five short syllables, all with the vowel 'a', were perhaps given a rhythm to remember them as such and could then be employed to call to and keep in mind the meanings given to them, even in situations where it was difficult to contemplate.

Bernhard 1967 (p.166) puts forward another theory. It is inspired by Paul Thieme's *Brahman* interpretation and might explain the next step in the development: People believed that the combination of truth and rhythm had a magical effect. Such an effect might especially have been expected, when no longer any sense was associated with a *dhāraṇī*. But note that such *dhāraṇīs* can be contemplated, as the Bodhisattvabhūmi (p.273) says, as conveying the meaninglessness of the world.

In Janet Gyatso's 1992 article, which I read after writing these remarks, I found many observations which throw a new and interesting light on most aspects of *dhāraṇī* mentioned here. It is however a systematical essay, employing Peircean semiotics and depending on a study of *dhāraṇī* by a Tibetan scholar who flourished in the early twentieth century. Its merits can better be discussed at another occasion.

#### Appendix: Vessantara

The story of Prince Viśvantara / Vessantara ("Allesverschenker", according to Jacobi's etymology, see Alsdorf 1957 p.3 n.8) is conspicuous in the aforementioned Daśabhūmika collection of Jātaka motifs. Read from its viewpoint the particle 'or' (*vā*) combining the motifs suggests that one had to be prepared to fulfill different wishes of different persons at different times. As it contains no example of self sacrifice it may have paved the way for focussing on more realistic acts of giving up considerable parts of one's wealth and trying to regain them for other acts of *tyāga*, as described in the Bodhisattvabhūmi. Vessantara's giving away of his wife and children is not echoed as a precept as far as I can see.

Let us now consider the case, also appearing in Jātakas (e.g. in the Yuvañjaya/Yudhañjaya Jātaka), that a person renounced worldly life and thereafter no longer had any wealth to give nor the right to regain it. Renouncing all one's possessions once for all could be called a great sacrifice, but it would, as such, have been recognized, only if they were given to persons in need. However, when worldly life was renounced, possessions normally did not go to the poor, nor to a *stūpa*, nor to the circle of bodhisattva renouncers a person joined, nor to a monastery which accepted bodhisattvas, but remained in the family.

The Ratnāvalī, ascribed to Nāgārjuna, testifies to the possibility of a bodhisattva entering a traditional monastery. After having prescribed a king's behaviour that leads to buddhahood the fourth chapter concludes: or if it is too difficult to establish such a righteous rule, it is better to become a monk. Nothing is said here of giving up the kingdom as a cause of merit to be dedicated to buddhahood. One may suppose that a son inherited the kingdom. In verses 2-33 of the fifth chapter (ed. Michael Hahn, Bonn 1982) the only reason for entering a monastery seems to be to get rid of one's faults. Then another motive appears. For a monk it is easier than for a layman to develop the virtues preparing for buddhahood. One has to generate seven perfections (the six well known plus compassion) and to get through ten stages (*bhūmi*) loosely associated with these virtues. The first perfection (V 36a) is 'giving' (*dāna*), defined as *svārthaparitṛyāga*. This could be translated with 'giving up one's own aim', if one superficially compares the definition (V 36b) of the second virtue, *śīla*, which is defined as *parahitakriyā*. But that seems to be a late idea in Mahāyāna (Har Dayal p.180). The author is more likely to have made an indication of what he found in a *daśabhūmi* text about the stages one and two. In the *Daśabhūmikasūtra* the bodhisattva is admonished first to focus on giving away his possessions (DaBhV 12,5 ff.). This would support the translation 'giving away one's possessions' for *svārthaparitṛyāga*. The same idea is suggested by the Chinese (T.1656 p.503b27: *shě zì wù míng shī* and Tibetan (ed. Hahn p.147: *sbyin pa ran nor yon̄s gtoñ ba*) translations of the Ratnāvalī. And to the second *bhūmi* in the *Daśabhūmikasūtra* (DaBhV 15,9) belong 10 "ways of good action" (*kuśalakarmapatha*) beginning with respect for other beings' life in such words as: *prāṇātipātāt prativirato bhavati nihata-daṇḍo nihataśastro nihatavairo lajjāvān dayāpannaḥ sarvaprāṇibhūteṣu hitasukhānukampī maitrīcittaḥ*. Here *parahitakriyā* is implied as a contrasting term.

One could argue that giving up all one's property, as it is mentioned in Ratnāvalī V 36a, refers to the bodhisattva's entering a monastery. But in

the 5th chapter this should no longer be an advice for a person who at the beginning of the chapter (V 1) already tries to keep a monk's precepts. It is more likely a remainder of the old *bhūmi* scheme of noble and wealthy lay bodhisattvas, now appended to the traditional task of monks, the elimination of faults.

That the precepts of the *Daśabhūmikasūtra* mentioned here had been meant for the laity can also be derived from the third of the ten ways of good action explained in DaBhV 15,16 (T.285 p.465c24): being content with one's own wife, not longing for the wives of others (*svadārasamtuṣṭaḥ paradārānabhilāṣī*). Note however that at the end of the first chapter (DaBhV 14,19, T.285 p.464b10) already the idea appears that one should become a monk. This is probably an insertion representing the redactor's view.

On the ten ways of good action (*kuśalakarmapatha*) see Hirakawa 1963, p.73-79; he could have made his point clearer by quoting the above details from the *Daśabhūmika*. Another detail strengthening the point is *adattādānāt prativirataḥ*, explained as being content with one's own property, not longing for the property of others (*svabhogasamtuṣṭaḥ parabhogānabhilāṣī*).

The scheme of ten ways of good action, as it appears in the second chapter of the *Daśabhūmikasūtra* or in D III p.290, does not contain a prohibition of intoxicating drinks known from the *pañcasīla* scheme for lay people. The ten ways of good action prohibit (1) killing, (2) taking what is not given, (3) adultery, (4) mendacity, (5) reporting utterances causing discord, (6) harsh speech, (7) frivolous talk, (8) covetousness, (9) malice, (10) erroneous views (see also Takasaki Jikido, *An Introduction to Buddhism*, Tokyo: The Tōhō Gakkai, 1987 p.177).

The list is identical with what in some later Pāli texts is called *dasa-sīla* (see PTSD p.712b), but not with the ten *sikkhāpadas* of the monks. It does not, as these *sikkhāpadas* do (see PTSD p.708b, Lamotte H p.59), focus on ascetic behaviour and contain a prohibition of intoxicating drinks, of eating after noon, of entertainment, of cosmetics and adornments, of comfortable beds, and of gold and silver. These ten *sikkhāpadas*, not the older *dasa-sīla*, are meant when in modern Sri Lanka lay persons call themselves *dasasil*, thereby indicating that they try to live as monks (see Lowell W. Boss, *The Female Renunciants of Sri Lanka: The Dasasil-mattawa*, JIABS vol.10 no.1 (1987), note 3).

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