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Mahāyāna Buddhism: The Doctrinal Foundations

2nd edition

Paul Williams

To all my dear colleagues past and present at the University of Bristol's Department of Theology and Religious Studies

Mahāyāna Buddhism

'The publication of Paul Williams' *Mahāyāna Buddhism: The Doctrinal Foundations* in 1989 was a milestone in the development of Buddhist Studies, being the first truly comprehensive and authoritative attempt to chart the doctrinal landscape of Mahāyāna Buddhism in its entirety. Previous scholars like Edward Conze and Etienne Lamotte had set themselves this daunting task, but it had proved beyond them. Williams not only succeeded in finishing the job, but did it so well that his book has remained the primary work on the subject, and the textbook of choice for teachers of university courses on Buddhism, for 20 years. It is still unrivalled. This makes a second edition all the more welcome. Williams has extensively revised and updated the book in the light of the considerable scholarship published in this area since 1989, at the same time enlarging many of his thoughtful discussions of Mahāyāna Buddhist philosophical issues. The result is a tour de force of breadth and depth combined. I confidently expect that Williams' richly detailed map of this field will remain for decades to come an indispensable guide to all those who venture into it.'
Paul Harrison, *George Edwin Burnell Professor of Religious Studies, Stanford University*

Originating in India, Mahāyāna Buddhism spread across Asia, becoming the prevalent form of Buddhism in Tibet and East Asia. Over the last twenty-five years Western interest in Mahāyāna has increased considerably, reflected both in the quantity of scholarly material produced and in the attraction of Westerners towards Tibetan Buddhism and Zen.

Paul Williams' *Mahāyāna Buddhism* is widely regarded as the standard introduction to the field, used internationally for teaching and research, and has been translated into several European and Asian languages. This new edition has been fully revised throughout in the light of the wealth of new studies and focuses on the religion's diversity and richness. It includes much more material on China and Japan, with appropriate reference to Nepal, and for students who wish to carry their study further there is a much-expanded bibliography and extensive notes and cross-referencing. Everyone studying this important tradition will find Williams' book the ideal companion to their studies.

Paul Williams is Professor of Indian and Tibetan Philosophy and Co-director of the Centre for Buddhist Studies at the University of Bristol. The author of six books and an editor of a further eight, he is a former President of the UK Association for Buddhist Studies. Among his other books for Routledge is *Buddhist Thought: A Complete Introduction to the Indian Tradition* (2000).

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Contents

Preface and acknowledgements x

1 Introduction **1**
Buddhism: doctrinal diversity and (relative) moral unity 1
The Indian background 7
Factors that may have contributed to change 12
Abhidharma 15
Mahāsāṃghikas and the Lokottaravāda 18
The origins of the Mahāyāna, and the laity 21
Mahāyāna before 'Mahāyāna' – the Ajitasenavyākaraṇanirdeśa Sūtra 27
On the origins of the Mahāyāna – some more sūtras 30
The justification of the Mahāyāna sūtras 38

2 The *Perfection of Wisdom (Prajñāpāramitā) Sūtras* **45**
On the Mahāyāna sūtras 45
The origins and development of the Prajñāpāramitā literature 47
Wisdom (prajñā) *and its perfection* 49
Absence of Self – the extensive perspective 51
The Bodhisattva 55

3 Mādhyamika **63**
Nāgārjuna and Āryadeva 63
The development of the Mādhyamika tradition in India 65
Emptiness and intrinsic existence – the incompatible rivals 68
A brief note on Mādhyamika method 71
Three Mādhyamika critiques 72
On causation 73
On the Self 74
On nirvāṇa 75
The two truths 76

Meditation and emptiness – an impressionistic outline 79
A final note – Mādhyamika in China and East Asia 81

4 Yogācāra **84**
Background 84
The Yogācāra tradition – scholars and texts 86
The three natures (trisvabhāva) 88
Mind 92
Substratum consciousness, consciousness and immaculate consciousness 97
Yet more disputes within the Yogācāra tradition 100

5 The Tathāgatagarbha **103**
Some Tathāgatagarbha Sūtras 104
The Tathāgatagarbha *in the* Ratnagotravibhāga 109
Tibet – the gzhan stong *and* rang stong *dispute* 112
The Dasheng qixinlun (Ta-sheng ch'i-hsin lun) *and the* Tathāgatagarbha *in East Asia* 115
Dōgen on the Buddha-nature 119
A note on some contemporary issues: Critical Buddhism and a debate on not-Self in Thai Buddhism 122
Critical Buddhism 122
Not-Self in contemporary Thai Buddhism 125

6 Huayan – the Flower Garland tradition **129**
Buddhism in China 129
The Avataṃsaka Sūtra 132
The Huayan tradition in China 138
Huayan thought – Fazang's 'Treatise on the Golden Lion' 141
A note on some aspects of Huayan practice 144
The Avataṃsaka Sūtra *and Vairocana in Buddhist art* 146

7 The *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka (Lotus) Sūtra* and its influences **149**
A note on Tiantai (Tendai) 161
Nichiren Shōnin and his tradition 165

8 On the bodies of the Buddha **172**
Prolegomenon to the Mahāyāna 172
The bodies of the Buddha and the philosophy of emptiness 176
Yogācāra – the system develops 179
A note on the dGe lugs schema of the Buddha's bodies 182
A final note: the 'nonabiding nirvāṇa' and the lifespan of the Buddha 185

9 The path of the Bodhisattva **187**
Buddhism reaches Tibet 187
The eighth-century debates 191
Compassion and the Bodhicitta 194
Bodhisattva stages, paths and perfections 200

10 Trust, self-abandonment and devotion: the cults of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas **209**
Buddhānusmṛti – *recollection of the Buddha* 209
The pratyutpanna samādhi *and Huiyuan* 212
The notion of a Buddha Field (buddhakṣetra) 214
Some Bodhisattvas 218
Maitreya 218
Avalokiteśvara 221
Tārā 225
Mañjuśrī 226
Kṣitigarbha 229
Some Buddhas 231
Akṣobhya 231
Bhaiṣajyaguru 234
Amitābha/Amitāyus 238
The Amitābha sūtras 238
Amitābha's Pure Land in China 243
Hōnen Shōnin (1133–1212) 254
Shinran Shōnin (1173–1262) 259

Notes 267
References 389
Index of names 422
Index of subjects 430

Preface and acknowledgements

This book is intended as an introduction to the ideas of Mahāyāna Buddhism, and also to some of the recent scholarly work in the field. It is not an elementary academic introduction to Buddhism as a whole or to Buddhist thought. For Buddhism in general I recommend my colleague Rupert Gethin's *The Foundations of Buddhism* (OUP, 1998). For Buddhist thought I recommend my other book (written with Anthony Tribe), *Buddhist Thought: A Complete Introduction to the Indian Tradition* (Routledge, 2000). Although the present volume gives the necessary background to Mahāyāna Buddhism, it presupposes that the reader already has an idea who the Buddha was, and what his basic teachings were.

The first edition of this book appeared in 1989. It was completed, of course, earlier. Reviewers were kind to the book. It has been widely used as the standard single volume on its subject, and translated into several languages. Since 1989, however, there has been a great deal of further research and although the book has been reprinted just about every year since its publication its original purpose as an introduction to recent scholarly work has become a little difficult to defend. Although it is recognizably the same book, organized according to the same structure as originally, in this second edition every sentence has been considered anew and rephrased or replaced where it was felt necessary. There are several new sections, and the book is significantly longer than its earlier incarnation. Compared with the first edition readers will notice there is much more consideration of East Asian Buddhism, and the practice of Mahāyāna. Nepalese Buddhism is mentioned where relevant. There are also many long footnotes, adding more detail, taking further the discussion of the main text, and giving guidance and references for those who wish to pursue some of the themes in greater depth and at a more advanced level. It is hoped that the book will thus serve both as a reasonably comprehensive introduction to its subject and also as a reference manual for more advanced students who wish to take their studies further.

A number of interesting areas have still had to be omitted, or receive relatively cursory treatment. Most notable in this respect, to my mind, is tantric Buddhism and Zen (Chan). Tantric Buddhism is complex and obscure, and sufficiently different in origins – and sometimes perhaps tenet – from other aspects of Mahāyāna Buddhism to require separate treatment. There is now an excellent introduction to the doctrinal aspects of Indian tantric Buddhism written by Anthony Tribe in Chapter 7 of our *Buddhist Thought*. There are many

books on Zen. I have given, I believe, the doctrinal basis necessary for understanding Zen as a particular expression of Buddhism. In the last analysis I must bow to restrictions of space.

Those familiar with the first edition of this book will notice that for this second edition Chinese names and words have been romanized in the pinyin system, although I have also given the older Wade–Giles romanization of Chinese words at their first occurrence. Please also note that as far as possible all modern Japanese names are cited in the Western fashion, with the family name last. Traditionally in Japan the family name comes first, and you may sometimes find it cited that way in other publications.

A number of scholars, as well as my students, have read parts of the manuscript and made helpful comments. For the first edition it gave me great pleasure to thank Steven Collins, Richard Gombrich and John Hinnells for their observations and constant encouragement. A special appreciation went at that time to Lance Cousins, who made extensive and detailed comments on a number of the chapters, drawing in particular on his deep knowledge of the Theravāda tradition. For this second edition I would also like to thank my colleagues Rupert Gethin, John Kieschnick, Rita Langer and John Peacock at the University of Bristol's Centre for Buddhist Studies. I am grateful in particular to John Kieschnick for loan of his books and his encouragement and unwearying help with all things Chinese. I have been very, very lucky in my university colleagues both in Buddhist Studies and more widely in the Department of Theology and Religious Studies. This book is dedicated to them with deep affection and gratitude. I would like to thank too Professor Yukio Kachi, then of the Department of Philosophy, University of Utah, and Professor Paul Harrison who both wrote to me correcting some errors and typographical mistakes, Ken Robinson who also noticed many typographical errors in my manuscript, and my copy editor Sarah Hall who saved me from so many mistakes and infelicities. I am grateful to you all.

Thanks also to Sharon, our children, and now their lovely partners and our delightful grandchildren. To write a book is easy. But to strive to produce good human beings – now, there is a worthwhile venture.

1 *Introduction*

Buddhism: doctrinal diversity and (relative) moral unity

There is a Tibetan saying that just as every valley has its own language so every teacher has his own doctrine. This is an exaggeration on both counts, but it does indicate the diversity to be found within Buddhism and the important role of a teacher in mediating a received tradition and adapting it to the needs, the personal transformation, of the pupil. This diversity prevents, or strongly hinders, generalization about Buddhism as a whole. Nevertheless it is a diversity which Mahāyāna Buddhists have rather gloried in, seen not as a scandal but as something to be proud of, indicating a richness and multifaceted ability to aid the spiritual quest of all sentient, and not just human, beings.

It is important to emphasize this lack of unanimity at the outset. We are dealing with a religion with some 2,500 years of doctrinal development in an environment where scholastic precision and subtlety was at a premium. There are no Buddhist popes, no creeds, and, although there were councils in the early years, no attempts to impose uniformity of doctrine over the entire monastic, let alone lay, establishment. Buddhism spread widely across Central, South, South-East, and East Asia. It played an important role in aiding the cultural and spiritual development of nomads and tribesmen, but it also encountered peoples already very culturally and spiritually developed, most notably those of China, where it interacted with the indigenous civilization, modifying its doctrine and behaviour in the process. Some scholars have seen this looseness and adaptability of its doctrinal base as a major weakness in Buddhism, contributing to its eventual absorption by a triumphant Hinduism in India and tending to syncretism when confronted by indigenous cultures. Étienne Lamotte (1958), in his *Histoire du Bouddhisme indien*, perhaps the standard work covering pre-Mahāyāna Buddhist history in India, has bemoaned the way the Buddha left the order without master or hierarchy, and sees this as a major factor contributing to the eventual collapse of unity and the formation of sects. While Buddhists themselves lament the disappearance of the Dharma, the Doctrine, from its homeland, however, they tend to see this as an inevitable occurrence in an epoch when, as the Buddha predicted, spirituality is on the decline. From earliest times in Buddhism there was a strong tendency to portray the Doctrine not as a series of tenets to be accepted or rejected, but rather

as a medicine for curing quite specific spiritual ills. Mahāyānists in particular see adaptation, and perhaps even syncretism, as a virtue in the Dharma, enabling the teachings to be adapted to the needs of hearers, and thereby indicating the wisdom and compassion of the Omniscient Buddha.

The importance of appreciating doctrinal diversity applies not just to Buddhism as a whole but to the Mahāyāna itself. There is a fallacy which I shall call the 'essentialist fallacy'. It occurs when we take a single name or naming expression and assume that it must refer to one unified phenomenon. This is indeed a fallacy, as a little thought will show, but it is a peculiarly pervasive and deep-rooted fallacy, giving rise to the feeling that because we use the same word so there must be some unchanging core, perhaps a type of essence, to be identified by the relevant definition. Thus the *same thing* is expressed each time the utterance is used. Because the expression 'Mahāyāna' (or its equivalent in the local language) has been used by Buddhists from perhaps as early as the first century BCE to the present day, from India through Tibet, Central Asia, Mongolia, China to Japan, Far East Asia and the Western world, so it must refer to some identifiable characteristics which we can capture in a definition. 'Surely the author must be able to define his subject', we are thinking, 'otherwise how does he know what he is talking about?'

Buddhist philosophy itself, from its inception, embodied a sustained criticism of this essentialist fallacy. As far back as we can trace the teaching of the Buddha we find a penetrating analysis by which unities are dissolved into their constituent parts and true diversity is revealed. An ability to look behind unities and see them as merely words, convenient but misleading linguistic constructs, has always formed an important factor in developing insight meditation, the spiritual cultivation which alone will lead to seeing things the way they really are, the *sine qua non* of nirvāṇa, enlightenment, the cessation of moral obscurations and ignorance. As far as we know the Buddha himself dissolved away the unity we call the human being, or person, into an ever-changing series of physical matter, sensations, conceptions, further mental contents such as volitions and so on, and consciousness. Thus there is dissolved away any real Self, any unchanging referent for the name, the word 'I'. To understand this deeply and directly is to see things the way they really are, the practical repercussion of which is a complete cessation of egoistic grasping, attachment, and self-concern. Thus the forces which lead to continued rebirth come to an end and thence ends, to quote the scriptures, 'this complete mass of frustration, suffering' (Pali: *dukkha*).

Such, as far as we can now tell, was the principal religious project of the Buddhist virtuoso monk at the time of the Buddha and in the early centuries after his death. As time went on, so those monks engaged in insight meditation took their analytical knives to the unities into which the human being had been dissolved, extending them to other beings, taking a closer look at the world around them and, as we shall see, in the Mahāyāna one tradition, the Mādhyamika, set out to show that absolutely nothing, no matter how exalted, could resist this penetrating analysis, this analytic dissolution.

So the critique of the essentialist fallacy was always an integral part of Buddhist philosophy and spiritual practice, although not all Buddhist traditions went as far as the

Mādhyamika in its application. It would be a good idea, I think, if we too could learn from the Buddhists at this early stage in our study of Mahāyāna to look behind linguistic unities and see them as simply constructions imposed by the use of a single naming expression. Mahāyāna is not, and never was, an overall single unitary phenomenon. It is not a sect or school but rather perhaps a spiritual movement (or, as Jan Nattier insists below, a *vocation*) which initially gained its identity not by a definition but by distinguishing itself from alternative spiritual movements or tendencies. Within Mahāyāna as a spiritual movement we find a number of doctrinal and philosophical schools and thinkers who cannot be placed so easily inside identifiable schools. Mahāyāna was, moreover, not a sudden phenomenon with a readily identifiable and unitary geographical or conceptual origin, it was not a planned movement spearheaded by a committee of geniuses (or fanatics). It developed over a number of centuries as an alternative and distinctive view of what Buddhism and the concern of some or perhaps even all Buddhists should ultimately be. Its growth and development in the early centuries was marked by, and from our perspective is all but identical with, the evolution of a new and distinctive canonical literature, the Mahāyāna *sūtras*. If we look at this enormous literature, claiming a disputed canonical authenticity, what we find in reality is a shifting mass of teachings with little or no central core, many of which are incompatible with each other and within which we can sometimes detect mutual criticism. There is scarcely a unitary phenomenon here, save in its eventual concern to identify itself as *Mahāyāna*, as a great, superior path to religious fulfilment – or perhaps the path to the greatest spiritual fulfilment – distinguished from other religious tendencies which it considers to be inferior, that is, as *Hīnayāna*.[1] It is for reasons like this that Jonathan A. Silk has suggested (in Williams 2005b: 377) adopting a minimalist approach to defining (or, better, specifying) Mahāyāna Buddhism and Mahāyāna Buddhists:

> Let us posit that Mahāyāna Buddhists were the authors of Mahāyāna scriptures, and a Mahāyāna community was a community of such authors. One immediate and fundamental result of this formulation is that we must stop referring, at the very least provisionally, to 'the Mahāyāna' in the singular. Until and unless we can establish affinities between texts, and therefore begin to identify broader communities, we must – provisionally – suppose each scripture to represent a different community, a different Mahāyāna.

Hence, Silk contends, we should thus be prepared to refer to 'Mahāyānas' rather than 'Mahāyāna'.[2]

In general what unifying element there is in Buddhism, Mahāyāna and non-Mahāyāna, is provided by the monks and their adherence to the monastic rule. In the centuries after the death of the Buddha there arose a number of doctrinal schools and monastic sects.[3] The latter are primarily identified through their own Vinayas, or monastic codes. These do differ, and their differences indicate past schism and form fruitful fields of minute comparison for modern scholars. Monks in Sri Lanka are forbidden to handle money. In Tibet[4] monks were sometimes quite wealthy. Sri Lankan monks wear orange robes. Tibetan monks wear robes of heavy-duty maroon cloth, while Zen monks in Japan wear black.

Heinz Bechert has pointed out that the Buddhist term usually translated as 'schism', *saṃghabheda*, literally 'splitting of the *saṃgha*', the monastic order, 'does not mean a "schism" in the sense known from Christian church history, where it nearly always implies dissensions in the interpretation of dogma. In Buddhist tradition, "splitting of the Sangha" always refers to matters of monastic discipline' (Bechert 1982a: 65). Sects might as a matter of fact differ on doctrinal matters, and of course doctrinal differences might arise after schism has occurred, which could then differentiate further the groups thus formed. Nevertheless, differences of doctrine would seem to be a matter of the individual group attracted or convinced by them, rather than a monastic sect as such. In theory a monastery could happily contain monks holding quite different doctrines so long as they *behaved* in the same way – crucially, so long as they adhered to the same monastic code. One of the major non-Mahāyāna philosophical schools, the Sautrāntika, seems to have had no monasteries and no separate monastic code. There were no Sautrāntika monks, although there were monks who held Sautrāntika views.

We need to be cautious, however, about whether Bechert is right that *saṃghabheda* in ancient India was always a matter of monastic discipline, and could not be generated solely or primarily by doctrinal dispute. Recently Joseph Walser has argued that even in Theravāda, at least if we can follow Buddhaghosa (fifth century CE), the term *saṃghabheda* can be found applied to cases of monks who teach what is not the Dharma (Doctrine) to be the Dharma, and not applied just to Vinaya matters (2005: 99–100). And Walser recounts too a discussion in the Mahāsāṃghika Vinaya that suggests 'disturbance in the institutional mechanism for scriptural reproduction' as contributing to *saṃghabheda*, as well as Vinaya innovations (*ibid.*: 100–1). On the other hand Jonathan Silk says of the definition of *saṃghabheda* in the Vinaya of the Mahāsāṃghika sect that it 'is constituted by a failure of all the monks resident in the same sacred enclosure (*sīmā*) to communally hold the *uposatha* rite. Differences over doctrine are *not* grounds for *saṃghabheda* in the Mahāsāṃghika Vinaya'. Silk is aware of an apparent contrast with some other sects, since he continues (in Williams 2005b: 380; italics original):

> In fact, what appears to be a contrast with the views of other sects, some of which allow doctrinal disputes to split the community (*cakrabheda*), has been shown by Shizuka Sasaki to be in reality a virtual universality of opinion that the only true cause of schism, at least in the times after the Buddha's nirvāṇa, is failure to hold joint rituals (*karmabheda*).

Clearly, as Silk himself points out in a footnote, *saṃghabheda* and associated issues need further research.

Although there are a number of different Vinayas that were formulated in ancient India, the differences, while important to the monks concerned, are nevertheless relatively insignificant. Moreover there was no Mahāyāna Vinaya as such produced in India. Indian Mahāyāna Buddhist monks and nuns all adhered to Vinaya rules which were formulated by the sects that originated during the early centuries of Buddhism in India. Outside India too, in ninth-century Tibet, for example, during the early transmission of Buddhism to Tibet,

the king Khri lde gtsug brtan (pronounced: Tri day tsuk ten) decreed that monks should all adhere to the important monastic code of the Mūlasarvāstivāda, a sect and not in itself anything to do with Mahāyāna. As a result of this only the Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya was translated into Tibetan. The only complete Vinaya surviving in the original language is the Pali Vinaya of the Theravādins, the Buddhist tradition now associated with Sri Lanka and South-East Asia.[5] Other Vinayas are available in Chinese translation, and Chinese monks, nowadays and throughout most of history almost completely Mahāyāna in terms of their orientation and aspiration, generally adhered to the Sarvāstivāda and Dharmaguptaka Vinayas. In East Asia monks with Mahāyāna orientation sometimes produced texts modifying the spirit of the Vinaya, emphasizing the importance of a compassionate intention even if that might involve breach of the letter of the precept. But there was no significant attempt in India to construct and impose a systematic Mahāyāna Vinaya rivaling those of the sects of Nikāya Buddhism. Mahāyāna was not in origins, and really never was, a rival *sect*. It is unlikely therefore that as such it was a result of schism (*saṃghabheda*).[6] Mahāyāna-oriented monks, and monks with no interest in Mahāyāna whatsoever, could live without necessary discord in the same monastery so long as they held the same code, even though we have reason to believe that the non-Mahāyāna monks may have viewed with some scorn the beliefs and private practices of the Mahāyāna monks and sometimes this scorn at least in the early days may have spilled over into more overtly antagonistic behaviour (see below). It is hence not surprising that some Chinese pilgrims to India, who left detailed accounts of their travels, not infrequently found monasteries containing both Mahāyāna-oriented monks and non-Mahāyāna monks. Yijing (I-tsing), for example, writing at the very end of the seventh century CE, contrasts Mahāyāna and 'Hīnayāna' as follows:

> Both adopt one and the same discipline (Vinaya), and they have in common the prohibitions of the five *skandhas* ('groups of offences'), and also the practice of the Four Noble Truths. Those who worship the Bodhisattvas and read the Mahāyāna *Sūtras* are called the 'Mahāyānists', while those who do not perform these are called the Hīnayānists.[7]

It follows from this that it is possible for members of any Buddhist sect, any Buddhist tradition with a separate Vinaya, also to embrace Mahāyāna. Assuming the Pali expression *vetullavāda* refers to Mahāyāna, then we know that there were quite early on followers of Mahāyāna in Sri Lanka within what would now be thought of as Theravāda, who were suppressed by king Vohārikatissa in the early third century CE.[8] Mahāyāna is held by its adherents to be the highest religious aspiration, the aspiration to full and perfect Buddhahood, to which is often added that this is 'for the benefit of all sentient beings'. It is effectively the *bodhisattvayāna*, the vehicle, path, or way followed by a Bodhisattva, one who is on the path to becoming a fully enlightened Buddha. As Jan Nattier puts it, with reference to one relatively early Mahāyāna sūtra:

> For the *Ugra[paripṛcchā Sūtra]* . . . the Mahāyāna is not a school, a sect, or a movement, but a particular spiritual *vocation*, to be pursued within the existing Buddhist

> community. To be a 'Mahāyānist' – that is, to be a bodhisattva – thus does not mean to adhere to some new kind of 'Buddhism,' but simply to practice Buddhism in its most rigorous and demanding form.[9]

It seems certain that this aspiration as a vibrant living option alongside the aspiration to simply one's own liberation, nirvāṇa, the state of an Arhat, originally took form across the boundaries of a number of Buddhist sects, and was no doubt in origin a generalization from an appreciation of the career of wisdom and compassion over many lifetimes of Śākyamuni, the 'historical' Buddha himself. Research into the sectarian origins of putative early Mahāyāna sūtras (or of some versions of them) is very tentative and still very much in its infancy. But there is some evidence to support the suggestion that the *Ugraparipṛcchā Sūtra* (Nattier 2003a: 80–1) or the *Ratnarāśi Sūtra* (Silk 1994: 32) may have originated among the Dharmaguptakas. It has also been suggested that the *tathāgatagarbha* ('Buddha Nature') teachings – and therefore the *Tathāgatagarbha Sūtra* – may have had something in origins to do with the Mahāsāṃghika sect.[10] Moreover it may have been the case that the audience for the *25,000 Verse Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra* and *100,000 Verse Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra* was familiar with Dharmaguptaka teachings while the audience for the *8,000 Verse Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra* was not (Walser 2005: 233–4). If we move outside the early Mahāyāna sūtras we find for example that the great compendium of Mahāyāna doctrine and practice known as the *Dazhidulun* (*Ta-chih-tu Lun*: **Mahāprajñāpāramitā Śāstra*) was almost certainly written by authors from a Sarvāstivāda or Mūlasarvāstivāda background (Demiéville 1973: 477).[11] The issue is however complicated since Nattier's work on the *Ugraparipṛcchā* has suggested that the sūtra may have circulated in a number of sectarian communities and been modified in accordance with sectarian context (Nattier 2003a: 129). Hence the actual sectarian *origins* of a sūtra may be elusive.

That Mahāyāna was embedded in its origins and development in the Buddhist sects, not in themselves Mahāyāna, is supported by inscriptional evidence. With the exception of one inscription from perhaps 104 CE (Indian dating is an extremely precarious business), the earliest inscriptions containing recognizably Mahāyāna formulations date from as late as the fifth or sixth centuries CE. Moreover the earlier inscription, on a statue of Buddha Amitābha found in North India, while clearly Mahāyāna, also uses formulae characteristic of non-Mahāyāna epigraphy. As far as inscriptional and indeed artistic evidence is concerned, Mahāyāna appears to have been an uninfluential minority interest until well into the Common Era, originating firmly within the framework of other monastic traditions thought of as non-Mahāyāna (Schopen 2005: Chs 7–8). Summarizing the results of his extensive research into evidence for Mahāyāna in Indian inscriptions and art, Gregory Schopen (*ibid.*: 12) comments:

> The cumulative weight of the different evidences is heavy and makes it clear that regardless of what was occurring in China and although Mahāyāna *sūtras* were being written at the time, it is virtually impossible to characterise Indian Buddhism in the Middle Period – the period from the first to the fifth century – as in any meaningful sense Mahāyāna. In India it appears more and more certain that the Mahāyāna was not institutionally,

> culturally, or art historically significant until after the fifth century, and not until then did Mahāyāna doctrine have any significant visible impact on the intentions of Buddhist donors.

Moreover Schopen also points out that the material evidence suggests that when Mahāyāna did emerge in India, perhaps in the fifth or sixth centuries, as a clearly named group with its own monasteries, this was in peripheral, marginal, areas where Buddhism had previously little or no presence or, alternatively, where it had declined (*ibid.*: 14).[12]

The suggestion, then, is that Mahāyāna was in its origins and for many centuries in India almost exclusively the concern of a small number of monks and nuns originating from within the regular Buddhist sects, and as such subject to Vinayas that were not in themselves anything to do with Mahāyāna. Still, as David Seyfort Ruegg (2004: 16) has recently pointed out, absence of evidence for Mahāyāna in, e.g., art and inscriptions does not *in itself* indicate that Mahāyāna was not present, or how many followers of Mahāyāna there were:

> [E]arly Mahāyāna would appear neither to have been generally established as an organized institutional entity nor to have been constituted a socio-religious order separate and apart from the Nikāyas [sects] of the Śrāvakayāna [i.e. non-Mahāyāna Buddhism], which are better attested epigraphically at this early time. Accordingly, the absence from many a donative inscription of mention of either the Mahāyāna or the Mahāyānist is perhaps just what might be expected in the circumstances. . . . [A]n argument from silence can have force only if there exists a cogent reason for expecting a given document to refer to some thing had it in fact been in existence at the time of the writing of the document.

Be that as it may, Schopen and Ruegg are both agreed that the idea of schism or radical break, and dramatic religious changes, simply fails to cohere with what we now know of Buddhist religious development as it occurred, not in texts but in actual practice in India, over a number of centuries.

The relative moral unity provided by the Vinaya (at least for most of the Buddhist world) also has its parallel in the code for the laity. There are some differences, but generally speaking all over the Buddhist world someone will be deemed a particularly good Buddhist, a pious layperson, if he or she takes refuge in the Buddha, his Dharma, and the Community (*saṃgha*) – usually or primarily the monastic order, although in Mahāyāna it can also include the wider community of committed practitioners – and tries to adhere firmly and strictly to a renunciation of killing, stealing, sexual immorality, lying, and taking alcohol or mind-disturbing drugs. Thus in spite of the considerable diversity in Buddhism what we find is that Buddhism has a relative unity and stability in the moral code and in particular in the order of monks and (where they still exist) nuns.[13]

The Indian background

Richard Gombrich, in his companion volume to this one on *Theravāda Buddhism* (1988), has spoken of the councils after the death of the Buddha. Only the first two councils are

accepted by all Buddhist traditions, although even here the details of their occurrence differ widely, so much so that it has been suggested that the First Council, supposedly held at Rājagṛha immediately after the death of the Buddha, was in fact not held at all. Traditionally the reason for holding the First Council was a hint of moral laxity (that is, *saṃghabheda*) on the part of at least one monk, combined with the need to establish through recitation the Canon, to be transmitted in immaculate state to succeeding generations. The reciting and authorization by Arhats, those who had achieved enlightenment, of the texts of the Canon was the most important event of the First Council as far as Buddhist tradition is concerned. Indeed the event of the council was so important for succeeding generations that there is a Mahāyāna tradition which maintains that contemporaneous with the First Council which established the non-Mahāyāna canon there was another council of Bodhisattvas, those beings who have vowed to become perfect Buddhas, superior to the Arhats. At this contemporaneous council the Bodhisattvas recited and authorized the collection of Mahāyāna sūtras. Thus the Mahāyāna sūtras, of debated authenticity, were given the prestige of antiquity and a respectable *imprimatur*.

Nevertheless, with all due respect to Buddhist tradition, it really would be quite wrong to think that the Canon was settled and closed at this early date. There are works contained in the Pali Canon, for example, which date from many years after the death of the Buddha. In time different sects produced different canons, each claiming to be the one recited at the First Council. Perhaps it is not surprising, therefore, that over a period of centuries there arose new texts also claiming to be the authentic word of the Buddha. We find a Sarvāstivāda source complaining, with reference to the three-fold division of the Canon, 'After the Nirvāṇa of the Buddha in the Sūtras, false Sūtras were placed; in the Vinaya, false Vinayas were placed; in the Abhidharma, false Abhidharmas were placed' (Lamotte 1983–4: 9; 2005b reprint: 193); and a later text: 'What can we do about it? The Master has entered Nirvāṇa, the Saddharma [True Doctrine] no longer has a leader. Many sects have formed which debase the meaning and the letter as they fancy' (*ibid.*). Be that as it may, there is significant legendary evidence of dissension even at the time of the First Council. A monk named Purāṇa is reported to have commented that

> the Doctrine and the Discipline have been well chanted by the Elders; nevertheless, I maintain that I retain the Doctrine in my memory just as I heard it, just as I obtained it from the very lips of the Blessed One. (*ibid.*)

It is important in looking at the development of Buddhism in India between the death of the Buddha and the rise of Mahāyāna to remember that we are dealing with centuries of doctrinal change combined with geographic dispersal over a subcontinent. It is easy to forget that while we can write in a few words about changes which took, say, 200 years, this is nevertheless to render artificially definite what was in reality a gradual shift not experienced, not lived through, by any one person. A series of gradual, almost imperceptible changes, from the perspective of the scholar who stands back and observes centuries in one glance, can indicate a massive change which no monk or layperson ever actually experienced.

As with a painting by Seurat, for example, the picture is only visible from a distance. At the level of the canvas itself there is simply no picture at all. So too with changes in space. Buddhism probably spread within India and into Central Asia along trade routes, particularly the rivers, and the monks, who were by nature semi-nomadic, were natural missionaries. Nevertheless, India is a subcontinent with considerable regional, cultural, and geographic variation. In the days before fast public transport and telephones the spread of ideas was slow and ideas would necessarily undergo changes to suit local conditions and interests. It is quite wrong to think of Buddhism as an identifiable and homogeneous doctrine superimposed upon an identifiable and homogeneous 'Indian people'. Time and space led to change and adaptation (without necessarily changing the fundamental moral and soteriological concerns).

Moreover, in India after the time of the Buddha variations of time and space were compounded with considerable forces of political and social change. During the period from the death of the Buddha to an identifiable Mahāyāna we find, first of all, the breakdown of old monarchies and republics under forces of political unity and centralization, issuing in the first great national empire of ancient India, that of the Mauryas. With unification and strong central control, national and international trade and travel, society and ideologies too invariably changed.

Richard Gombrich has devoted some space to discussing the importance for Buddhism of the great Buddhist Mauryan emperor Aśoka (Asoka in Pali). Aśoka (mid-third century BCE) seems to have extended the Buddhist cult of relic worship (contained in *stūpas*, relic mounds), perhaps as a unifying factor for his fundamentally disunited empire, and to have encouraged Buddhist missionary activity. More importantly, he provided a favourable climate for the acceptance of Buddhist ideas, and generated among Buddhist monks certain expectations of patronage and influence on the machinery of political decision making. The historian A. L. Basham has argued convincingly that prior to Aśoka Buddhism was a fairly minor factor in the religious life of India (Basham 1982: 140). Indeed one suspects that the impact of the Buddha in his own day was relatively limited. He is portrayed as an intimate of kings and nobles, and yet the friendship of the Buddha did not prevent the deposing of the king of the imperial power of Magadha, Bimbisāra, by his crown prince. According to the legends this ungrateful son, Ajātaśatru, even conspired with the Buddha's erring cousin Devadatta to kill the Buddha himself. It is a story of jealousy and enmity which suggests that the Buddha's charisma was not such as to banish all evil thoughts from the mind.

According to Basham, archaeological evidence for Buddhism between the death of the Buddha and Aśoka is scanty; after the time of Aśoka it is relatively abundant. Unfortunately, however, the chronology and sequence of events in these centuries is extremely complex and obscure. Aśoka sent various missionary-ambassadors abroad, and it has proved possible more or less to anchor chronologically the lifetime of Aśoka in relationship to various Hellenistic kings apparently visited by these ambassadors. But this still gives rise to problems of how to relate the dates of Aśoka to the time of the Buddha.

The view found in the Southern (Singhalese) Buddhist tradition (at least, in its so-called 'corrected' version) is that Aśoka came to the throne 218 years after the death of the Buddha, and suggested correlations with Hellenistic rulers give the date of Aśoka's accession at 268 BCE. Thus this gives 486 BCE for the death of the Buddha, and in the past this date has commonly been adopted by Western scholars. Aśoka died in about 232 BCE. There are other ways of calculating the date of the death of the Buddha however, and in the 'Northern' Buddhist tradition (found in, say, China) Aśoka is said to have come to the throne just 100 years after the death of the Buddha. For his part Heinz Bechert (see Bechert 1982b: 30) favours the shorter 'Indian chronology'. What this amounts to is that in common with certain earlier scholars Bechert advocates placing the death of the Buddha more than a century later than is usual, at roughly 370–368 BCE. There is much to favour this later date, which would give just 100 years between the death of the Buddha and the reign of Aśoka and would increase the value of the relatively abundant Aśokan and post-Aśokan materials in understanding early Buddhism. Doubt as regards the accuracy of the 486 date is now so widespread among scholars that the one consensus that appears to be emerging is that the 486 BCE date commonly given in books on Buddhism is wrong. The death of the Buddha should be placed much nearer 400 BCE than 500 BCE.[14]

Aśoka himself advised monks on their reading matter and apparently purified the monastic order by expelling erring monks. This may have established a tradition in some circles of close contact between the monastic order and the secular arm. If so, perhaps this did not always have favourable results. But for our purposes what is significant here is the phenomenon of extensive lay patronage, with monks and laity drawing closer together. As we shall see, I do not hold to the theory that Mahāyāna Buddhism arose under direct lay influence and involvement. Nevertheless perhaps it is in the increasingly close relationship between monks and lay patrons, and the concern of certain monks with the spiritual welfare of as wide a social group as possible, that we can trace one way or another at least some of the formative elements of the Mahāyāna. Paradoxically, other formative elements of the Mahāyāna may lie in precisely a reaction against this growing involvement of the Buddhist *saṃgha* with what some seem to have considered excessively worldly concerns. And it may be from the time of Aśoka that the forces issuing in the Mahāyāna, forces for an alternative conception of the spiritual path and goal (Nattier's 'vocation'), begin to crystallize.

Étienne Lamotte has commented that if the Mauryan period, and particularly that of Aśoka, marks the golden age of Buddhism, the two final centuries of the ancient era constitute a period of crisis (Lamotte 1958: 385). The Mauryan Empire fell within 50 years of the death of Aśoka, seized by a Brahmin general, Puṣyamitra Śuṅga. There is a tradition that this general inaugurated a persecution of Buddhism, and it is from this time that it is possible to detect the growth of classical Indian devotional theism. Nevertheless Buddhist missionary activity continued, and the Śuṅga period (second century BCE) also began the flowering of early Buddhist sculpture. With the decline of the Śuṅgas, North Indian history is dominated by invasions from Central Asia, by Greeks, Scyths (known as the Śakas in India), and the Yuezhi (Yüeh-chih). These Yuezhi were known in India as the Kuṣāṇas, and their

Indian empire was part of an extensive empire in Central Asia. The Kuṣāṇa king Kaniṣka (probably *c.* 127 CE) is said to have been an important patron of Buddhism, and in terms of patronage the age of invasions was significant for Buddhists, since the foreign invaders were among the most enthusiastic supporters of Buddhism. This was no doubt partly due to the willingness of monks to recognize kings as Bodhisattvas, or sometimes Universal Emperors (*cakravartin*), and also the fact that Buddhism is more readily able to accept foreigners than is orthodox Brahmanism, for which a foreigner is automatically an outcaste.

Indeed, the interest of foreign kings and aristocrats in the possibility of being declared or declaring themselves to be Bodhisattvas may well have been one of the factors that made Mahāyāna itself particularly attractive to them, and it may be one factor too explaining the success of Mahāyāna forms of Buddhism outside India. The Bodhisattva is on the long path to Buddhahood. His or her model is that of the benevolent Śākyamuni who, over the many incarnations made widely familiar through the popular Jātaka tales of the Buddha's previous births before becoming a Buddha, was often a king or prince, aristocrat, or rich merchant, but was always acting to benefit others.[15] Moreover since all agree that a Buddha is superior to an Arhat, so a monarch who is known to be a Bodhisattva may gain a reflected glory allowing him to claim or imply superiority over Buddhists on the path simply to becoming an Arhat, that is, most other Buddhists including the majority of Buddhist monks and nuns. It is perhaps in this context that we should understand the recently discovered 'Huviṣka fragment', as well as a related recently discovered inscription from Endere, in Xinjiang in Central Asia. In both cases we have a king (including possibly the Kuṣāṇa king Huviṣka) described as having 'set forth on the Mahāyāna'. The fragment dates from roughly the fourth century CE, although Huviṣka reigned in the mid-second century (Braarvig 2002: 255–67). The Endere inscription dates from about the middle of the third century CE, and has been related to a letter written on wood from about the same time, also from Central Asia, that refers to a local governor too as 'setting forth on the Mahāyāna' (Walser 2005: 31–2, and references). Still, it seems to me one should be careful not to make too much of all this. We do not know what the content of the kings' and other laypersons' having 'set forth on the Mahāyāna' amounts to, since we are very unclear what being a follower of the Mahāyāna then really meant in India, and particularly for a busy layperson. We lack a clear social and historical context for knowing what 'setting forth on the Mahāyāna' actually involved at this time. What we can see, however, is that kings and other politically powerful lay dignitaries (especially perhaps foreign kings in India, and kings in wild foreign places outside India) were interested in declaring themselves to be Bodhisattvas. Of course, they could scarcely declare themselves Arhats. Given the Buddhist context, a king declaring himself – or being declared – a Bodhisattva as a price for patronage of Buddhism makes sense, and is perhaps not totally surprising. We know of places where it occurred elsewhere in Buddhist history in, e.g., what might be thought of as a Theravāda context in Burma and Sri Lanka with no implications of any association with Mahāyāna ideas and practices.[16]

There is some reason to think that in India these foreign invasions may have engendered a sense of crisis in both orthodox and heterodox Indian traditions. According to Basham (1981: 46–7):

> The well known *Mārkaṇḍeya Parvan*, interpolated into the *Mahābhārata*, gives us an idea of how the time appeared to some at least of the orthodox brahmins. In the form of a prophecy, . . . we are told of impure barbarians overrunning the holy land of Bhāratavarṣa [India], slaughtering and looting, bringing in their wake insecurity of life and property, banditry, and the disintegration of the norms of family life. In these circumstances the sacrifices and rituals of orthodoxy are neglected, and the only religions to flourish are those of the heretics, who teach people to worship mounds (*eḍūka*) containing dead men's bones – a clear reference to the Buddhists.

Nevertheless, in Buddhism too invasion by foreigners seems to have been associated with legends and traditions of the final disappearance of the Buddha's teaching. There was a widely held view, found in the Canon, that the Buddhist Doctrine would last for only 500 years, but that it would have lasted for 1,000 years had it not been for the decision to admit women into the order. According to one scheme present in Indian Mahāyāna sources, however, after these 500 years the Dharma does not completely disappear. There remains a 'semblance' or 'reflection' of the Dharma. During this time Buddhist practice, and enlightenment, is not impossible but is much more difficult than it was during the first period. Eventually the Dharma becomes completely lost until its rediscovery by a future Buddha.[17] Not all sources are agreed on the figures of this eventual decline (see Lamotte 1958: 210 ff.). There is not infrequently a tendency to prolong each period. Nevertheless, an awareness of living in the 'last days', an era when things are on the decline, or are not what they were, 'life under siege', is common in early Mahāyāna sources, and (as we shall see in more detail below) it is possible that Mahāyānists saw their own practices and beliefs in this context as bulwarks against this moral and spiritual decline.

Factors that may have contributed to change

I have argued that for Buddhism doctrinal differences are perhaps not always such a serious matter as they are for religions where salvation is based primarily on faith in certain tenets and dogmas. Schism, however, is classed as one of the most serious monastic offences, and we have also seen that the appearance after the death of the Buddha of sūtras deemed spurious was a source of concern to each school which considered its own Canon to be the sole complete and authentic testimony of the teaching of the Master.

On the basis of accounts of his last days preserved in, e.g., the Pali *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta* it is often said that the Buddha refused to appoint a successor, although the issue is complicated since there is also a widespread Buddhist tradition that it was Mahākāśyapa who succeeded the Buddha as head of the Buddhist community, and tradition again has it that Mahākāśyapa was responsible for the First Council and its codification of the teachings.[18]

Still, as far as we can tell from accounts of the last days of the Buddha, the Lord was at some pains to make sure before he died that his followers were united as a monastic body, and also united on, and fully understood, those practices which would lead to nirvāṇa, to Arhatship. It is possible that the Buddha did not think of his teaching as a massive and monolithic dogmatic structure but rather favoured a relative freedom for each disciple to go his or her way within the framework of Dharma thus laid down. At least, some such spirit may be reflected in the account of the Buddha's last days contained in this quotation from the Sarvāstivāda *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra*. The Lord gently told his attendant, Ānanda:

> From the beginning, Ananda, I have taught you that whatever things are delightful and desirable, joyful and pleasing, these are subject to separation and destruction, to disintegration and dissociation. So Ananda, whether now or after my decease, whoever you are, you must remain as islands to yourselves, as defences to yourselves with the *Dharma* as your island and the *Dharma* as your defence, remaining unconcerned with other islands and other defences. If you ask the reason for this, then know that whether now or after my decease, whoever remain an island to themselves, as defences to themselves, with the *Dharma* as their island and the *Dharma* as their defence, not concerning themselves with other islands and other defences, such ones are the foremost of my questing disciples.
>
> (Snellgrove 1973: 401–2)

We do not know, but perhaps the Buddha would not have been averse to later doctrinal innovation if it occurred within the fundamental structure of the Dharma, that is, if it was of spiritual benefit on the path to nirvāṇa. But what is to count as being of spiritual benefit? Perhaps it was the Buddha himself, but probably later tradition, who gave guidelines that culminated in the 'four great arguments/authorities' (*mahāpadeśa*) for controlling doctrinal innovation. These provide criteria for appraising whether a teaching heard is a genuine 'word of the Buddha' or not. A teaching heard can be judged authentic if it is received from the Buddha himself, or a *saṃgha* of elders, or a group of elders specializing in the transmission of Dharma, Vinaya or *Mātṛkās* (proto-Abhidharma – see below) or just one monk who specializes in those. But one can only appeal to the prestige of these four authorities if what is taught also coheres with what is known to be accepted already as scriptural tradition, i.e. it coheres with the Sūtras and the Vinaya. Other sources also add that such putative 'word of the Buddha' should not contradict the way of things (*dharmatā*).[19]

Nevertheless, these criteria for doctrinal appraisal still leave room for a great deal of subjective interpretation. This subjectivity may have been exacerbated in some circles by a further group of four interpretive principles – albeit by no means accepted universally – the 'four reliances' (*pratiśaraṇa*). These specified that one should rely on the Dharma rather than the person teaching the Dharma, the meaning or point (*artha*) rather than the actual words used, sūtras that are definitive (*nītārtha*) rather than those requiring interpretation in some

further sense (*neyārtha*), and rely on gnosis, direct insight (*jñāna*), rather than discursive everyday awareness (*vijñāna*).

If Buddhism as a whole lacked a hierarchical system with a leader at the top to whom finally all disputes could be referred, then this too might have encouraged the possibility of doctrinal divergence as each person or group, or regional *saṃgha*, or whatever 'remained an island to itself'. In particular, compared with the early days subsequent centuries showed that much of the Master's teaching was unsystematized and perhaps sometimes ambiguous – or, from a point of view favourable to innovation, flexible and open. From the perspective of later doctrinal concerns it was not always clear whether the Buddha had been talking in colloquial terms or within the framework of literal philosophical truth. For example, the school (or schools) known as the Vātsīputrīya-Sāṃmitīya taught the actual existence, in some sense felt to be stronger than simply a practical one, of a *pudgala*, a person (see Priestley 1999; Châu 2000). This appeared to its opponents to play a number of the roles given to a Self. In defence of this teaching the Vātsīputrīya-Sāṃmitīya quoted a sūtra in which the Buddha maintained that the five psycho-physical constituents (*skandhas*) which make up the human being are a burden, and the bearing (or 'bearer'; see Collins 1982: 164–5) of the burden is the person (*pudgala*) with this or that name. The person must therefore be an entity in addition to the psycho-physical constituents which other Buddhists accepted as the true analysis of the human being. Opponents objected that the Buddha was not speaking here literally but loosely. They insisted that the so-called 'person' is not an ultimate reality but just a verbal object, a concept superimposed upon the psycho-physical constituents for practical purposes in the same way that the concept 'table' is superimposed upon the table's parts. The need to elucidate and systematize, to list the phenomena which do indeed really exist and distinguish them from the conceptual constructions of our everyday life, eventually issued among the Buddhist schools and sects in the great lists and ontological disputes of the Abhidharma. It is important to remember, however, that all the schools and sects of Buddhism considered their teachings and traditions to be perfectly orthodox. They each tended to highlight passages of their canon which supported their own views while ignoring or reinterpreting passages which might be taken to support other schools.

Let us note now some institutional factors in early Buddhism, in addition to the absence of one supreme head which, it has been suggested, may have promoted the development of rival traditions of interpretation and practice (see here, in particular, Dutt 1970: 42–50).

First, there was the division of monks into bodies, each concerned with the recitation and preservation of particular sections of the scriptures. We know that from an early time there were specialists in the Sūtras, and specialists in the Vinaya. With time the sūtra specialists, for example, also tended to divide into groups specializing in particular sections of the Sūtra canon. With the rise of the Abhidharma as a systematic analysis of the totality into its constituents there undoubtedly followed groups of monks specializing in philosophical analysis, fragmentation of the everyday world into its ultimately or finally real elements.

It is perfectly possible that the Sautrāntika school, which appears to have rejected as such much of the Abhidharma and subjected it to trenchant criticism, favouring the sūtras, was composed of sūtra specialists and its opposition to the Abhidharma reflected such opposition between rival groups of scriptural recitation and exegesis.[20]

Second, there was the grouping of monks around noted teachers, who were themselves specialists in particular branches of the teaching. The names of a number of the early schools appear to be derivatives from personal names – Dharmaguptakas from a teacher named Dharmagupta, the Vātsīputrīyas from Vātsīputra, and so on. We hear in the Canon of personal disciples of the Buddha who were noted for their attainments in particular branches of the Doctrine. Thus we find reference to Śāriputra as the great philosophical analyst, and Upāli as a specialist in the Vinaya.

Third, we should note that initially there may have been a relative flexibility in the rules of discipline. According to Nalinaksha Dutt, the monastic rules were defined but not codified at the time of the Buddha, and there is evidence that the Buddha himself was willing to adapt the rules to fit in with particular personal or group circumstances. Adaptation was possible to suit particular local conditions and it appears that a well-controlled monk could under certain circumstances be permitted greater freedom than his ill-disciplined brethren. We know also that the Buddha permitted greater austerity in some cases, but resisted attempts to persuade him to require austerities of all monks. Indeed, as we shall see, as time passed and Buddhist monasticism became more complex, wealthy, and socially more closely integrated into Indian lay society an ascetic backlash – an appeal to the virtues and even the necessity of such additional austere ascetic practices (in Sanskrit known as the *dhūtaguṇas*), such as always wearing robes made from rags from the rubbish heap, in order to be a good or serious Buddhist monk – may have been an important factor in the rise of the Mahāyāna itself.

Finally, it has been suggested that the Buddha's preference for preserving and teaching the Dharma in local languages rather than the pan-Indian Sanskrit may have led to misunderstanding and differences between traditions. In some cases this might have happened, for we know that difficulties in sanskritization of Middle Indo-Āryan (like Pali) expressions sometimes led to later confusion or different understandings.[21] But it is doubtful to my mind whether this would have been a major factor in promoting the growth of different doctrinal schools.

Abhidharma

Perhaps the most interesting doctrinal developments among the early schools were the growth of the Abhidharma on the one hand and the 'supramundane' (*lokottaravāda*) teachings on the other. Early Mahāyāna sūtras, particularly those of the Perfection of Wisdom (Prajñāpāramitā), show in general a certain animosity towards at least some trends in the Abhidharma – which is not to say (as is often said) that they were antagonistic to the Abhidharma project as such. On the other hand it is possible to detect in the

Mahāsāṃghika supramundane doctrines the crystallization of ideas which, in a more elaborate form, are often thought of as characteristically Mahāyāna. In spite of this, however, it would be wrong, I think, to portray the Mahāyāna as originating or occurring exclusively, or even mainly, within the Mahāsāṃghika group of sects and schools, perhaps in some sort of rivalry with those sects associated with the Abhidharma. We have already seen that Mahāyāna did not originate on a sectarian basis, and we have no historical evidence to identify the Mahāyāna as a whole with one particular group of early Buddhist sects or schools.

The Abhidharma itself is not a school but a body of literature.[22] Not all the Buddhist sects had Abhidharmas, but those that did, most notably the Sarvāstivāda and the Theravāda, gave their Abhidharmas canonical status alongside the Sūtras and the Vinaya, the three together forming the Tripiṭaka, the Three Baskets, the Buddhist canonical corpus. This Abhidharma literature seems to have grown out of lists of technical concepts (*mātṛkās*) which were drawn up very early in the history of Buddhism, perhaps as mnemonic devices which provided the framework for teaching, systematic exegesis through discussion, and also equally systematic meditation. The Abhidharmas we have now appear to be a product of the period between Aśoka (third century BCE) and Kaniṣka (second century CE), although the taxonomic tendencies of the Abhidharma can be found in the sūtras and were common to early Buddhism.

All Buddhist traditions accepted an analysis of the human being into the five psychophysical constituents. As we have seen, it was widely accepted in Buddhism that there is no fundamentally existing independent human being. The human being is really made up out of an ever-changing series of physical matter, sensations, conceptions, volitions and so on, and consciousness. Implicit in this very old analysis, therefore, is a distinction between what appears to be true and what is really the case. Eventually, in the Abhidharma traditions, this issues in a distinction between conventional (*saṃvṛti*) and ultimate (*paramārtha*) truth (or reality – *satya*). The conventional reality is the world in which we live. Ultimate realities are the elements which *really* compose the world of our experience. The main concern of the Abhidharma, at least as it was eventually systematized by Buddhist scholars, is the analysis of the totality, of all that is, into the building blocks which, through different combinations, we construct into our lived world. The name given to these building blocks, which are said to be ultimate realities in the sense that they cannot be reduced further to other constituents, is *dharmas* (*dhammas* in Pali; not to be confused with Dharma, meaning the Doctrine). In the Theravāda there are 82 classes of such constituents. Eighty-one are said to be of conditioned *dhammas*, and one, nirvāṇa (Pali: *nibbāna*), is unconditioned. In the Sarvāstivāda there are 75, 72 conditioned and 3 unconditioned. Conditioned constituents arise and cease in a continuous stream. They are the results of causes, exist for a very short time indeed, and yet, unlike the objects of our everyday world, which have merely conventional or conceptual existence, all *dharmas* in some fundamental sense really exist. According to developed Sarvāstivāda (Vaibhāṣika) thought they are substances (*dravyas*); each one exists itself as what it is and not as the result of any act of conceptualization, imputation of unity or identity for practical everyday purposes, or

reification, on the part of a perceiver. A *dharma* alone, in the technical terminology of the Abhidharma, 'bears its [own] intrinsic nature' (*sasvabhāva*: see Williams 1981).[23]

The Theravāda Abhidhamma divides its list of conditioned constituents into:

(i) Physical constituents – 28 types of *dhammas*, including the four gross elements of earth, water, fire, and air, and agility, elasticity, malleability, material food and so on;
(ii) Mental constituents – 52 types of *dhammas*, 25 morally good, including non-greed, non-hatred, and non-delusion (the opposites of the three root poisons), faith, mindfulness, compassion; 14 morally bad, including wrong views; and 13 morally neutral, which gain moral colouring depending on the *dhammas* to which they are conjoined. The first seven of these 13 are common to all mental acts: contact, sensation, conception (these are the second and third *skandhas*, or *khandha* in Pali), will or volition, mental life, concentration, and attention.
(iii) Consciousness, the last type of conditioned constituent, which like all other conditioned *dhammas* arises, remains for a split second, and ceases, to be replaced by another constituent of the same type.

A monk developing insight meditation, wishing to see things the way they really are, develops the ability constantly to analyse his experiences into their constituents. He is said to dwell peacefully, observing the rising and falling of *dharmas*, thereby dissolving the objects of his attachment and cutting at the root of desire. Thus by learning to see things the way they really are he gains insight, bringing his ignorance to an end. With the cessation of ignorance, craving ceases and the meditator attains nirvāṇa. He is henceforth an Arhat.

Not all of the early Buddhist sects and schools accepted the Abhidharma analysis of the world. The Sautrāntikas appear as such to have rejected the Abhidharma Piṭaka, although they were very much involved in the development of their own rival analysis of reality (cf. Williams and Tribe 2000: 118–22). It is sometimes thought that one of the characteristics of early Mahāyāna was a teaching of the emptiness of *dharmas* (*dharmaśūnyatā*). This is a teaching that these constituents, too, lack intrinsic nature, are thus not ultimate realities, in the same way as our everyday world is not an ultimate reality for the Abhidharma. As a defining characteristic of early Mahāyāna philosophy, however, this is would appear to be false. Such a teaching can be found in a canonical text of the Pūrvaśailas, one of the subsects of the Mahāsāṃghikas and, as such, not in itself Mahāyāna. There is a sūtra called the *Lokānuvartanā Sūtra*, described in the Chinese and Tibetan canons as a Mahāyāna sūtra. However, this very same sūtra seems to be quoted by the Mādhyamika commentator Candrakīrti (seventh century CE) as a canonical sūtra of the Pūrvaśailas (see Harrison 1982: 225–7). The *Lokānuvartanā Sūtra* teaches both the doctrine of a supramundane Buddha (see below) and the absence of intrinsic nature in all things, including *dharmas* themselves. All things, no matter what, are hence only conceptual or conventional existents.

Thus not only is the emptiness of *dharmas* found in a text not apparently in itself anything to do with Mahāyāna (the same is also found in the so-called **Satya* (or *Tattva*) *siddhi Śāstra* of Harivarman (*c.* 250–350 CE), although that may have been influenced by

Mahāyāna sources), but this sūtra was later accepted into the Mahāyāna. This was certainly not the only time that non-Mahāyāna sūtras were subsequently to be taken as Mahāyāna. We shall see the same below, for example, in the short version of the *Rāṣṭrapālaparipṛcchā Sūtra* ('Minor *Rāṣṭrapālaparipṛcchā*').[24]

Mahāsāṃghikas and the Lokottaravāda

According to the Ceylonese chronology, about a century or so after the death of the Buddha a Second Council took place at Vaiśālī which, if we can follow Theravāda accounts, led to a schism between the Sthaviravādins, using this term to include the sects which later rose from them, such as the Sarvāstivāda, and another group who may have been the origin of the Mahīśāsakas but are sometimes (almost certainly erroneously) said to be the Mahāsāṃghikas. The expression 'Sthaviravāda' means Doctrine of the Elders', and it is this tradition with which the Theravāda identifies itself. For Heinz Bechert's shorter chronology the Vaiśālī council should occur during the reign of Aśoka, were he to accept the traditional view of 100 years between the death of the Buddha and the calling of the council. However, Bechert calculates the Vaiśālī council at 40 to 50 years after the death of the Buddha, which would place it perhaps at 330 or 320 BCE. For his part Lance Cousins (1991) has suggested that the Vaiśālī council may have taken place 70–80 years after the death of the Buddha.

The Theravāda tradition leads us to believe that the schism occurred over a number of points of discipline in which some monks were relaxing the Vinaya rules. They were accused of handling money donated by laymen, for example (which may reflect an adaptation of the Vinaya to the growing town-based mercantile economy of North India).[25] A council was convened, the 'lax' monks were defeated but they remained stubborn and sometime later convened their own council, breaking away from the orthodox body. They are said to have then altered the Canon and added new scriptures. This explanation is clearly one of schism, of *saṃghabheda*, and it seems likely that inasmuch as we can tell what happened something like this may reasonably have occurred to cause the first breach in the monastic order.

But this account does not fit with another tradition found particularly in non-Theravāda sources which attributes the breach to the so-called 'Five Points of Mahādeva'. According to this tradition a council was held some decades after the Vaiśālī council, this time at Pāṭaliputra. The five points were debated at the council and were accepted by the majority, hence the name *Mahāsāṃghikas*, those who adhere to the Great Saṃgha, that is, the majority.[26] The monks who refused to accept the majority decision subsequently named themselves *Sthaviravādins*. Thus, according to this account, this is actually where the Mahāsāṃghikas came from. We can be reasonably sure, anyway, that the Mahāsāṃghikas had nothing to do with the 'lax monks' of the Vaiśālī council. It is clear from Mahāsāṃghika sources themselves that they certainly knew of those lax monks, and were as opposed to them as were the Sthaviravādins.[27]

Our sources tend to be rather later than the events themselves. It is difficult to know how to take these accounts of early disputes and breaches in the monastic order, and some of them may well be nothing more than later polemical attempts to account for how the many different schools and sects emerged, with only limited reliable historical material to go on. It is not clear whether there ever was an actual monk called 'Mahādeva' who put forward (or was involved in some way in formulating) the theses attributed to him. The name may well have been used simply to indicate a controversialist, as philosophers might say as part of an argument 'Supposing Archibald said *X*, and Fiona replied *Y*'. Indeed, later sources tell of Mahādeva as a thoroughly evil monk who had sex with his mother, killed both his parents, repented and entered (or perhaps hid in) the monastic order and fomented disagreements and arguments. So perhaps the name was a stock one used of a controversialist with whom one strongly disagrees.[28] Possibly the points attributed to Mahādeva were always just points debated either individually or as a set among the early schools, intended more often than not to encourage the development of more precise doctrinal understanding (cf. Cousins 1991: 36). If so, there must remain a doubt whether these five points themselves could have really been the cause of a break between the Sthaviravādins and the Mahāsāṃghikas.

Still, whether or not they contributed in some way to the first (or indeed a subsequent) breach or schism in the monastic order, the points attributed to Mahādeva are worth noticing inasmuch as they suggest some opinions that were developing and being debated in early Buddhism. They mainly concern the status of the Arhat, the enlightened person. Mahādeva is said to have taught:

(i) An Arhat may have seminal emissions (possibly as the result of evil activity by Māra, i.e. from 'the Devil').
(ii) An Arhat can be subject to ignorance. Sources are not consistent in their interpretation of this. Perhaps this was not intended to mean religious ignorance, but rather an Arhat may be ignorant of a person's name, and so on.
(iii) An Arhat may have doubt (again, perhaps not concerning the fruitions of the Buddhist path, and their attainment, but about such issues as which road to take at a junction, and so on).
(iv) An Arhat may be instructed by another person.
(v) This fifth point may originally have been that an Arhat can fall away. As it stands now, it appears to say that entry into the Buddhist Way may be facilitated or brought about by an utterance, such as 'Suffering!'. It is still rather unclear what this last point meant (Cousins 1991; cf. Lamotte 1958: 300 ff.).

According to Paramārtha, who wrote a treatise on the schools (sixth century CE, and hence long after the events themselves), the 'heresy' of Mahādeva lay in wishing to incorporate into the Canon the Mahāyāna sūtras, and in attributing to the Arhats imperfections. As we have seen above, we know that sūtras of the Mahāsāṃghika and no doubt other early Buddhist sects were incorporated into the corpus of Mahāyāna sūtras.

It is possible that the reverse occurred. At any rate, what is interesting is the way in which Paramārtha connects Mahādeva (however anachronistically), and the tendencies contained in the teachings attributed to Mahādeva, with support for, and possibly the creation of, Mahāyāna literature. The five points may contain an implicit lowering of the status of the Arhat, or at least may have suggested in the minds of some that an Arhat lacks the full glory that was more and more being associated with the Buddha himself.[29] It is also possible that in certain circles the Arhat had been exalted in such a way as to abstract him from all possibility of occurrence. The Arhat needed to be brought closer to human reality. If so, this is interesting because among the more important differences that arose between the Sthaviravāda sects and the Mahāsāṃghikas was the Mahāsāṃghika teaching of the 'supramundane Buddha', an exaltation of the Buddha that perhaps corresponded in some way with an implied lowering (or limiting) of the status of the Arhat.

As far as we can tell, in all Buddhist traditions there was a tendency to see the Buddha as more than just a purely human being. He was said to have various miraculous powers and the 32 major and 80 minor marks of a superman. At one important point the Buddha denied that he was a man or a god. Rather, he was a Buddha, a fully enlightened one. His skin is described in the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta*, the Pali account of the Buddha's last days, as taking on a golden and shining appearance, and in the same text the Buddha explains to Ānanda that a Buddha can live, if he so wishes, for an aeon.

We know of the supramundane teachings (*lokottaravāda*) of the Mahāsāṃghikas primarily from a work called the *Mahāvastu*, which describes itself in the preface as a Vinaya text of the Lokottara ('Supramundane') branch of the Mahāsāṃghikas. Although there was a subschool of the Mahāsāṃghikas known as the Lokottaravāda, nevertheless some form of supramundane teaching appears to have been common to all Mahāsāṃghika schools, since it is found strongly stated in the Pūrvaśaila *Lokānuvartanā Sūtra* as well, and Paul Harrison (1982: 224) has argued that this sutra may indeed be one of the sources for the *Mahāvastu*. It is not clear how early the supramundane doctrine developed, however. It seems probable that, as the Theravāda *Kathāvatthu* suggests, the supramundane teaching was based on a statement in the Canon that although the Buddha was born in the world, and so on, he was not tainted by it. From this it was concluded that the Buddha during his life was in reality completely devoid of the impurities of the mundane world – he was not worldly, but was rather extraordinary, supramundane. During the centuries after the death of the Buddha we find developed an extensive and widely popular literature consisting of tales (the Jātaka tales) recounting the many virtuous deeds of the Buddha in his previous lives as a Bodhisattva, one on the path to Buddhahood. Indeed, it may have been reflection on these Jātaka tales, the wonderful deeds of compassion and wisdom, and the stages that Śākyamuni went through in his many previous lives on his path as a Bodhisattva aiming at supreme Buddhahood, that eventually suggested to some that the path of a Bodhisattva to Buddhahood was a higher way than that of an Arhat. It was indeed a 'Mahāyāna' that was worth embracing themselves.[30]

In Buddhist theory the result of good deeds is merit. Since the Buddha had developed such immense stores of merit from his previous lives, so there grew up the idea that the Buddha's birth and life too could not really be like that of ordinary humanity.[31] Hence the texts of the supramundane tradition describe the Buddha's birth in a wholly miraculous manner. He is conceived without intercourse, and his birth involves no pain. He emerges from his mother's right side without piercing her body. All his activities which appear ordinary are illusory.[32] He merely appears to wash, eat, sit in the shade, take medicine, and so on simply out of conformity with the ways of the world. To quote the *Mahāvastu* (Harrison 1982: 216–18; some material omitted):

> The conduct of the Lord is supramundane, his root of goodness is supramundane,
> The walking, standing, sitting and lying down of the Sage are supramundane.
> The Sage's wearing of robes is supramundane; there is no doubt about this.
> The Sugata's eating of food is likewise purely supramundane.
> The Fully Awakened Ones do indeed bathe, but no dirt is seen on them;
> Their forms resemble golden images; this is in conformity with the world.
> They make use of medicine, yet there is no sickness in them.
> The fruit (of the act of giving the medicine) is to accrue to the givers. This is in conformity with the world.
> Although able to suppress *karma*, the Victors make a show of *karma*.
> They conceal their sovereign power; this is in conformity with the world.
> They make a show of old age, but there is no old age for them;
> The Victors are endowed with a host of good qualities; this is in conformity with the world.

And so on and so on. The Buddha is said to be omniscient, never to sleep but in reality always to be in meditation. Such an exaltation of the Buddha among the Mahāsāṃghikas is perhaps one with moves in some circles towards playing down (by comparison) the Arhat. At least, the two moves are compatible. There can be no doubt that at least some early Mahāyāna sūtras originated in Mahāsāṃghika circles. In the *lokottaravāda* supramundane teachings we are getting very close to a teaching well-known in Mahāyāna that the Buddha's death was also a mere appearance; in reality he remains out of his compassion, helping suffering humanity, and thence the suggestion that for those who are capable of it the highest religious goal should be not to become an Arhat but to take the Bodhisattva vows, embarking themselves on the long path to a supreme and totally superior Buddhahood.

The origins of the Mahāyāna, and the laity

There is a theory that the origins of the Mahāyāna can be traced to the activities of the laity, a lay revolt against the arrogance and pretensions of the monks. This view was held strongly by Étienne Lamotte. In one of his last articles he summed up his views on the origins of the Mahāyāna as follows:

> During the first five centuries of its history, Buddhism progressed considerably; nevertheless, it had to face both external and internal difficulties because of the divergent tendencies which formed at the heart of the community. Some monks questioned the authenticity of the early scriptures and claimed to add new texts to them; others leaned towards a more lax interpretation of the rules governing their life; the scholastic treatises, continuously increasing in number, became more and more discrepant; finally, and above all, the laity, considering the monks' privileges to be excessive, tried to win equal religious rights for themselves.
>
> (Bechert and Gombrich 1984: 90)

Until relatively recently the view of the lay origins of the Mahāyāna, that lay people were instrumental in the formation of the Mahāyāna, has also been widely held as established fact among Japanese scholars where, it should be said, their emphasis on lay orders of Bodhisattvas engaged in altruistic activities reflects rather closely the situation, interests, and concerns of much of contemporary Japanese Buddhism itself. An important and widely accepted case for considerable lay influence on the rise of the Mahāyāna was published in an article by Akira Hirakawa (1963; cf. Hirakawa 1990: 256–74). Hirakawa's main point appears to be that the Mahāyāna grew up among an identifiable order of Bodhisattvas, composed of lay and renunciate members of equal status, centred on the stūpas, relic mounds, and relic shrine worship. The stūpas were administered by the laity, and as relic mounds were eventually identified with the Buddha himself. Hence occurred the growth of Buddha cults and the importance of the Buddha in the Mahāyāna. According to Hirakawa these stūpas were quite separate from, and in certain rivalry with, the monastic orders of the monks. Thus we find the development of an alternative religious tradition centred on Bodhisattvas and Buddhas, showing some hostility to the conduct and aspirations of the monasteries, particularly in respect to the definitely inferior status given to the laity in monastic Buddhism.[33]

It is impossible to do justice to Hirakawa's long article here.[34] Certainly, many Mahāyāna sūtras, some of which might be reasonably early in origins, show a clear awareness of the superiority of Bodhisattvas and the Bodhisattva path, together with a disparaging attitude to the Hearers (*śrāvakas*), those monks who were following the old path to Arhatship. Moreover, a number of the early Mahāyāna sūtras stress the importance of the laity. In the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa Sūtra* the layman Vimalakīrti is portrayed as an advanced Bodhisattva with a developed understanding of philosophy, admonishing and correcting a number of the Buddha's leading monastic followers. In another sūtra, the *Bhadramāyākāravyākaraṇa Sūtra*, it is said that Bodhisattvas are the true renunciates, not those (like monks) who merely renounce the household life; while yet another sūtra teaches that Bodhisattvas of correct understanding have no need to renounce the world and become monks. Corresponding to this is the role of interlocutors of the Buddha given to wise laywomen and girls, who are finally predicted to obtain perfect Buddhahood in the future. Particularly interesting in this context is the *Aśokadattāvyākaraṇa Sūtra*. Aśokadattā was

a 12-year-old princess who refused to stand and make obeisance to the monks when they entered the palace. The monks were followers of an Inferior Vehicle, a Hīnayāna: 'Your Majesty, why should one who follows the path leading to supreme enlightenment, who is like the lion, the king of beasts, salute those who follow the Hīnayāna, who are like jackals?' (Chang 1983: 116). She explained the supremacy of the Bodhisattvas. Even a novice Bodhisattva exceeds all those on the Arhat path. To mock the monastic teaching of the spiritual inferiority of women, a low, dualistic way of thinking, Aśokadattā turns herself into a man, and then back into a girl again. It is all relative, all in the mind. Her female form, we are told, was taken out of compassion to win (feminists?) over to the Dharma. Of course, to the traditional monastic way of thinking, based on the Buddhist path to becoming an Arhat, nothing could be worse, nothing more absurd, than religious instruction of monks by a 12-year-old lay girl. That, no doubt, is the point. Those who composed this text are intending to tell their monastic rivals and detractors that even a 12-year-old girl knows much more than they do. But it does not follow that such texts were composed by 12-year-old girls.

Indeed, in spite of these sūtras and many like them, most scholars have nowadays become extremely sceptical of the thesis of the lay origins of the Mahāyāna. Hirakawa's paper relies on too many suppositions to be fully convincing, and Gregory Schopen has argued against Hirakawa that a number of important early Mahāyāna sūtras show a distinctly hostile attitude to the stūpa cult. Schopen's suggestion, a suggestion that has had considerable influence, is that reference to worshipping the texts themselves, an extremely reverential attitude to the Mahāyāna sūtras, indicates that in cultic terms early Mahāyāna may well have been centred on a number of book cults, groups of followers who studied and worshipped particular sūtras. In the sūtras themselves worshipping the text is often specifically contrasted with the stūpa cult, to the detriment of the latter. Geographically, Schopen suggests, it is at least plausible that early Mahāyāna may have gravitated towards the place where the book was set up, worshipped with 'incense, flags and bells' – the very same forms of worship usually given stūpas. Many Mahāyāna sūtras conclude with the great, immense merits to be obtained from studying, memorizing, or just worshipping even one verse of the sūtra. They likewise condemn to hell those who would denigrate the sūtra, or the person who preaches the text (*dharmabhāṇaka*), a figure who may have played an important institutional role in the origins and spread of the early Mahāyāna.[35] Schopen concludes that,

> since each text placed itself at the centre of its own cult, early Mahāyāna (from a sociological point of view), rather than being an identifiable single group, was in the beginning a loose federation of a number of distinct though related cults, all of the same pattern, but each associated with its specific text.
>
> (Schopen 2005: 52)[36]

Richard Gombrich (1990; cf. Walser 2005: 135–9) has argued that it seems unlikely that Mahāyāna as we know it could have originated without writing. This seems clear given

the association of Mahāyāna in origins with the creation of the Mahāyāna sūtra literature, and also Schopen's mention of references in early Mahāyāna to worshipping the sūtras themselves in the form of books. The writing down of the Buddhist canon took place initially in the first century BCE. Thus, Gombrich argues, Mahāyāna as such is unlikely to have occurred – and certainly would not have survived – much prior to the use of writing for scriptural texts. Against this, Vetter (1994) has suggested that there is some evidence that early Mahāyāna material was transmitted orally. Even so, for Gombrich the important point is that Mahāyāna would not have survived without occurring within an enduring respected Buddhist organization which was prepared to preserve it. It is difficult to see in the case of Buddhism what that organization could be if not members of the regular organization which preserves Buddhist texts, the Saṃgha. One cannot imagine, on the other hand, the Saṃgha or indeed any significant Saṃgha member preserving radical innovative texts that originated in a lay movement against the Saṃgha itself.

Gregory Schopen's further work on the evidence for Mahāyāna in Indian inscriptions has shown that by far the majority of those associated with making donations and other religious activity towards stūpas were monks and nuns, and a large number of these were also learned members of the monastic community rather than their exclusively simpler brethren. Moreover in all inscriptions which are recognizably Mahāyāna in type, over 70 per cent of the donors are monks or nuns, mainly monks.[37] Laymen are very much in the minority (Schopen 1997: 31–2; cf. Schopen 2005: Ch. 7). Epigraphic evidence shows conclusively that by far the majority of those associated with donor activity from the earliest available inscriptions onwards were monks and nuns, and the proportion of monastic donors increased as time passed. These monks and nuns were not ignorant but often doctrinal specialists. Inscriptional evidence also shows that the cult of images was primarily a monastic concern, and that it was moreover a monastically initiated cult (Schopen 1997: 32).

Japanese scholars like Hirakawa and Étienne Lamotte notwithstanding, this should not come as a great surprise. In India generally, religious change was initiated by those who had the time and the influence on their wider religious community, which is to say, Brahmins and renunciates. We have absolutely no historical evidence of laypeople constructing or preaching new sūtras, and while we have the names of a number of monks, such as Nāgārjuna (probably second to third centuries CE), who advocated the early Mahāyāna – indeed, according to one source Nāgārjuna was accused of actually composing one of the Mahāyāna sūtras – nevertheless apart from the mythical lay heroes and heroines of the sūtras we have no names of laypeople who contributed to the doctrinal origins of the Mahāyāna. The Mahāyāna sūtras were clearly the products of monks, albeit monks whose vision of the Dharma embraced the possibility of lay practice at the superior level of a Bodhisattva on the path to Buddhahood, and who used lay figures in the sūtras to embody a critique of other monks seen as in some way defective in the light of the message of the sūtra, or having lost the real message and direction of the Dharma. I am influenced in this

view by a comment made in a different context by J. A. B. van Buitenen. Commenting on the theory that there was a tradition of kṣatriya (warrior) philosophy in ancient India, he observes:

> I do not wish to raise once more the specter of '*kṣatriya* philosophers,' . . . for I think it is without substance. What such a *kṣatriya* alignment means is not that there existed independently a strain of *kṣatriya* thought zealously and secretively concealed from brahmins who were hermetically sealed off from it; but that new thought might identify itself as 'new' by calling itself non-brahmin, i.e., not in line with those hidebound orthodox Vedic specialists who could think only old thoughts.
>
> (Buitenen 1981: 12)

It seems to me that there were equally no lay doctrinal traditions in Buddhism at the roots of Mahāyāna. Rather, to adapt the quotation, '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'.[38]

My view is supported, I think, by the *Ajitasenavyākaraṇanirdeśa Sūtra*, which we shall examine in the next section, and also by a very interesting and early Mahāyāna sūtra with the wonderful title of the *Pratyutpannabuddhasaṃmukhāvasthitasamādhi Sūtra* – or *Pratyutpanna Sūtra* for short! This sūtra was delivered by the Buddha to a group of Bodhisattvas and monks, but the most important group in the audience was said to be 500 householder Bodhisattvas, led by a certain Bhadrapāla to whom the body of the sūtra is addressed. The text describes how, after circulating for a short period, it will be hidden in a cave and rediscovered in the future, during the period of the decay of the Dharma.[39] The 500 lay Bodhisattvas ask that it should be their future incarnations which will rediscover and propagate the text. Thus far, the sūtra appears to suggest the lay origins of the work. However, it does not say that the 500 Bodhisattvas will be laymen in their future incarnations. Rather the sūtra explains in detail how, in future times, very few people will believe in this sūtra. There will be monks who will revile the sūtra and laugh at it, saying: '*Sūtras* like this are fabrications, they are poetic inventions; they were not spoken by the Buddha, nor were they authorized by the Buddha' (trans. in Harrison 1990: 56). And they will ridicule those few monks who accept the sūtra:

> These *bhikṣus* [monks] have a real nerve! These *bhikṣus* talk nonsense. It is a great wonder indeed 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, a conglomeration of words and syllables uttered merely in conversation.
>
> (Harrison 1990: 58)

Thus the sūtra itself describes how one group of monks will accuse another group of monks of having fabricated the sūtra. We see how literary sources support the epigraphic evidence that early Mahāyāna was very much a monastic movement with little

widespread support. From a non-Mahāyāna perspective the Mahāyāna was simply *absurd*. All of this fits with the accusation of Nāgārjuna of composing one of the Mahāyāna sūtras, and the association of Mahādeva with a wish to incorporate the Mahāyānna sūtras into the canon. Both Nāgārjuna and Mahādeva were monks.

One final point. Doctrinal innovation in Indian Buddhism was almost entirely the concern of monks, but it should not be thought that there is a great divide between monks and laity in Buddhism, as has sometimes been the case in the West. It is always possible for a fully ordained monk to return to lay life, or for a layperson to become a monk for a short period. While it is not possible to see the Mahāyāna as an attempt by the laity to obtain equal status with the monks, nevertheless whether or not it was present in the beginning of Mahāyāna one can see in the eventual development of Mahāyāna perhaps within and certainly outside India the growth of a form of religiosity prepared to give validity and doctrinal orthodoxy to religious practices and concerns, such as devotional acts, which may have been seen as inferior, not the concern of monks and, in a sense, not properly 'Buddhist' by certain other rather elitist monks. This feature of Mahāyāna can perhaps be characterized by what might be called 'doctrinal widening', rendering doctrinally respectable certain activities and beliefs which some monks may have viewed with disdain, and associated primarily with the ultimately useless activities of laypeople.[40] At our present state of knowledge of the origins and development of Mahāyāna it is difficult to give a completely satisfactory explanation of why this widening happened, although in socio-economic terms one relevant factor in India would have been the need to appeal in competition with other Indian renouncer groups to as wide a group of laity as possible for economic support, and in particular to appeal to kings for patronage.[41] One doctrinal factor was no doubt the centrality in Mahāyāna of the Bodhisattva and his or her career to perfect Buddhahood. Whether or not monks were instrumental in the origins of the Mahāyāna, with an emphasis on the path of the Bodhisattva came the theoretical possibility that a layperson may be a Bodhisattva and hence may indeed be spiritually superior to any ordinary monk and perhaps even to an Arhat. Being a monk is not intrinsically better than being a layperson, but is relative to its purposes in terms of the path to enlightenment or Buddhahood. Śākyamuni himself, in his previous lives as a Bodhisattva, was often a layperson. Hence the activities of a layperson cannot be irrelevant to the Buddhist path. As Buddhahood became supreme over Arhatship, so attaining Buddhahood, and therefore becoming a Bodhisattva, eventually became the new religious goal advocated in the Mahāyāna for all Buddhist practitioners capable of it. While the notion of the Bodhisattva as one who is destined to full Buddhahood is common to all Buddhist traditions, to set forth the path of the Bodhisattva as the ultimate aspiration for many and possibly even for all seems to be a uniquely Mahāyāna conception. Within this context the layperson, as a Bodhisattva or potential Bodhisattva, gains in importance. Correspondingly, the religious activities held by some to be characteristic of, or of most benefit to, laypeople become respectable. We find this growing respectability already in the pre-Mahāyāna tradition. In the *Ekottarāgama*, a canonical collection of the pre-Mahāyāna

sects, we find a sūtra in which recollection of the Buddha (*buddhānusmṛti*) can lead to nirvāṇa, and elsewhere in the Pali Canon we find the suggestion that awareness of and focusing with admiration on the Buddha may itself lead to enlightenment (Harrison 1978: 37–8; see Chapter 10 below).

Moreover as time passed another factor in the growing Mahāyāna sympathy for the religious activities of the laity can perhaps be traced in the changing status of the Buddha, and the growth of the idea that the Buddha's death was mere appearance – out of his compassion he remains to help suffering, sentient beings. Sociologically, it may be that the changing status of the Buddha corresponds with the growing socialization of Buddhism, its reabsorption into the society which it had originally renounced and from which it had distanced itself. Parallel to this reabsorption the monk, or the lay Bodhisattva, lays claim to a pre-eminent position within society, rather than outside it, and the Buddha himself, as the religious hero writ large, becomes a spiritual king, relating to and caring for the world, rather than a being who, after his death, has completely 'gone beyond' the world and its cares.[42] This changing attitude to the Buddha correspondingly turned attention also towards his previous lives as a Bodhisattva (or perhaps it was the other way round). First, if the Buddha is so compassionate then *all* religious practices, if they are of spiritual benefit, become the teaching of the Buddha, regardless of what they are or who is carrying them out. Second, as we have seen, in the Jātaka tales the Buddha as a Bodhisattva was often a layperson, or sometimes even an animal, always out of compassion and acting to develop the path to supreme Buddhahood. The developed Mahāyāna represents at least in part a coming to self-awareness of these currents of thought. We see in the creation of the corpus of Mahāyāna sūtras the development of a new religious system that eventually could be used to render these currents doctrinally orthodox and respectable.

Mahāyāna before 'Mahāyāna' – the *Ajitasenavyākaraṇanirdeśa Sūtra*

The *Ajitasena Sūtra* describes itself as a Mahāyāna sūtra although I suspect that this is another example of a sūtra which originally may well have had no clear or specific Mahāyāna identity and which must have belonged to a Mainstream Buddhist sectarian tradition. There appears to be neither a Chinese nor a Tibetan version, and the Sanskrit text (in a rather nonstandard Sanskrit) was discovered early in this century inside a mound near Gilgit, which is now in Afghanistan.[43] The mound was perhaps an ancient library, and the texts discovered appear to date in their discovered form from the sixth or seventh centuries CE (see Dutt *et al.* 1939). The *Ajitasena Sūtra*, however, is undoubtedly much earlier in origin, although how early is at the moment uncertain. It has been little studied, is quite short, and does not appear to have been an important Mahāyāna sūtra. Nevertheless, for our purposes here it is a rather interesting sūtra, since it seems to indicate a stage of proto-Mahāyāna, a stage of Mahāyāna prior to its own clear self-awareness as 'Mahāyāna', with all the concomitant senses of superiority and contrast with religious practices and beliefs deemed inferior.

The sūtra was clearly written by monks and aimed at the laity. Sociologically it occupies the Buddhist world we are familiar with from, e.g., Theravāda practice. One of the main themes of the sūtra is the importance of giving to monks, and the immense results which will follow from this in the future. An old beggar woman attempts suicide because she has nothing to give to the Buddha. She is presented with suitable alms by a god, and the Buddha explains that she had given such gifts to many previous Buddhas in her former lives. Her present poverty, and the poverty of many of her previous incarnations, was the result of a time when she had changed her mind about giving alms to a begging monk. As a result of her present gift she is now predicted to future Buddhahood, that is, she realizes her status as a Bodhisattva, and it is said that she will not be born in the future as either a woman or a pauper.

One of the key figures in the sūtra is a monk disciple of the Buddha called Nandimitra, described as a *mahāśrāvaka*, a Great Hearer, who is sent by the Lord to king Ajitasena as a spiritual friend (*kalyāṇamitra*). The main instruction Nandimitra gives to Ajitasena is on the merits of giving to monks, exactly the form of instruction traditionally given by any Mainstream Buddhist monks to their lay patrons. In the meantime the old beggar woman had died and been reborn as the son of king Ajitasena. Both king and son subsequently wish to renounce the world in the presence of the Buddha and become monks. The prince is ordained first, thus by priority of ordination gaining monastic superiority over his father. The sūtra continues with verses in which the son praises monkhood and exhorts his father to renounce the world while he has the possibility of doing so in the presence of the Buddha himself. The moment he was ordained the prince is said to have become an Arhat. On becoming an Arhat he sees all the Buddha Fields (*buddhakṣetra*; see Chapter 10 below). These are the realms in which the Buddhas reside and teach. They are not a completely Mahāyāna idea, but the notion of seeing all the Buddha Fields does appear to be Mahāyāna, as are the names of two of the realms, Sukhāvatī and Abhirati, which were mentioned earlier in the sūtra.

There is some reason to think that seeing Buddhas and Buddha Fields may have been a particularly potent impetus to religious practice for Buddhists during the formative period of the Mahāyāna.[44] There is a sūtra called the *Pradakṣiṇā Sūtra*, on the merits of worshipping stūpas. A version of this sūtra has been found written in Khotanese, a Central Asian language, with an epilogue written presumably by the person who had the sūtra copied. He describes how, through further endeavour, he would like to be able to see Buddhas everywhere, and how by his merits he hopes to be reborn in the Pure Land, or Buddha Field, of Sukhāvatī, where Amitāyus (= Amitābha) Buddha will foretell for him future Buddhahood (Bailey 1974: 18).[45] As we shall see, the *pratyutpanna* absorption (*samādhi*), in the sūtra of that name, is a meditative practice whereby a Bodhisattva can see with his eyes the Buddhas and receive teachings from them. There is growing evidence that visions may have been important in the inception and indeed the ongoing history of the Mahāyāna, as indeed were revelatory dreams.[46]

So the world of the *Ajitasena Sūtra* presents what appears initially to be a strange mixture of Mahāyāna elements and features with no particular Mahāyāna association and indeed in the past often thought of as being specifically non-Mahāyāna. This world is one of monastic supremacy. There is absolutely no antagonism towards the Hearers (*śrāvakas*) or the notion of Arhatship. Nevertheless, the Great Hearer Nandimitra is also predicted to full Buddhahood, that is, he too realizes that he is a Bodhisattva. In this respect he is no different from the beggar woman, a lay female, who turns into a prince and then becomes a monk and an Arhat. The sūtra describes the miracles of the Buddha, and reciting the name of the Buddha is said to save from suffering and hell. The text ends in the traditional manner of reasonably early Mahāyāna sūtras. Those who promulgate this sūtra will attain Buddhahood (not the state of an Arhat), while those who listen to even one verse will become Bodhisattvas. The preachers of the Dharma who recite this sūtra will receive favourable rebirths and ultimately become enlightened. Those who condemn the sūtra will go to some very nasty hells.

What marks this sūtra is the supremacy of Buddhahood and the possibility of anyone, monk or lay, becoming a Bodhisattva. But what distinguishes it from some other Mahāyāna sūtras is the lack of antagonism towards the Hearers, Arhatship, and any disparaging of the monastic tradition. This is a gentle, harmonious sūtra. What I want to suggest is that at least one reason why this sūtra is different from some other and more familiar Mahāyāna sūtras is that the word 'Mahāyāna' does not occur in it, save in the title given in the colophon. This sūtra shows clearly Mahāyāna tendencies, but is conceptually prior to the Mahāyāna's own clearly articulated self-awareness. As Mahāyāna, the Great Vehicle (or 'Vehicle to the Great'), one is not far from a contrast with Hīnayāna, the Inferior Vehicle (or 'Vehicle to the Inferior'). But initially, as the so-called Mahāyāna began to emerge, there was no sense of opposition to the Hearers as such, on the path to becoming Arhats, but only an opposition to those who denied the authority of the relevant sūtra. It was the authenticity of the new sūtras and what they taught that was of paramount interest and importance to the early Mahāyānists.

This lack of opposition to Mainstream Buddhist traditions as such in the very earliest proto-Mahāyāna is borne out, for example, by Lewis Lancaster's examination of the earliest Chinese versions of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā* (8,000-verse) *Perfection of Wisdom Sūtra*, in which he shows that a number of key Mahāyāna concepts are missing from the earliest versions although present in later versions. The world of the earliest *Aṣṭasāhasrikā* text is reasonably close to that of the pre-Mahāyāna traditions. This is exactly what we would expect from the epigraphic evidence. The earliest use of the word 'Mahāyāna' in Indian inscriptions dates from the sixth century CE, although it has been suggested (controversially) that other terms with an exclusive reference to Mahāyāna monks and lay followers had been used from about the fourth century (Schopen 2005: Ch. 7). This is a very long time after the earliest Mahāyāna literature, and indicates that while doctrinally there may have been a growing idea of the Mahāyāna as an alternative aspiration and spiritual

path from, say, the first century BCE, nevertheless the notion of a clear separate group identity among Mahāyāna followers, represented by their using a separate name for themselves as a group, took centuries to develop. To a monk in the first or second century CE the Mahāyāna as a visible institution may have been scarcely evident. Doctrinally, on the other hand, as expressed in texts, what marks the Mahāyāna as 'Mahāyāna' is its own growing self-awareness in spite of its diversity, from which followed opposition and further distinction. The *Ajitasena Sūtra* is a Mahāyāna sūtra before the clear concept 'Mahāyāna' as a distinctive institutional identification. It shows, therefore, the gentle shift of ideas which was already occurring prior to the polarization and unification given perhaps initially by that self-awareness alone.

On the origins of the Mahāyāna – some more sūtras

We have seen that there is no reason to think that the Mahāyāna sūtras originated among the laity as such. But where in that case did these Mahāyāna sūtras come from? Both Reginald Ray in his 1994 book *Buddhist Saints in India*, and Paul Harrison (1995: 67 ff.), among others, have suggested that, far from being the product of a lay popularizing movement, Mahāyāna in origins at least in part may reflect the influence of a forest or wilderness hermit tradition.[47] Paul Harrison has worked on some of the texts that are arguably the earliest versions we have of Mahāyāna sūtras, those translated into Chinese in the last half of the second century CE by the Indo-Scythian translator Lokakṣema.[48] Harrison points to the enthusiasm in the Lokakṣema sūtra corpus for the extra ascetic practices, for dwelling in the forest, and above all for states of meditative absorption (*samādhi*). Meditation and meditation states seem to have occupied a central place in early Mahāyāna, certainly because of their spiritual efficacy but also because they may have given access to fresh revelations and inspiration. Perhaps, Harrison suggests, this might explain the proliferation of the Mahāyāna scriptures themselves. More important, Harrison adds, meditation and powers associated with meditation may also have given the early Mahāyāna an edge in competition for scarce resources (1995: 66):

> This struggle, we may assume, was a double one: both against the wider religious community (the normal competitive framework) and also against other Buddhists, with whom they shared ordination lineages and institutional structures. Some of these co-religionists were clearly hostile to the new movement. The followers of the Mahāyāna had to lay claim to be in a sense the true successors of Gautama, the inheritors of his mantle, and they had to establish that claim both with other Buddhists and with the population at large. There were . . . two possible ways of doing this: by the possession of relics, and by the (perceived) possession of ascetic techniques and magical powers. Hence the glorification of the great *bodhisattvas* in the texts can be seen as an attempt to establish the Mahāyāna's prior claim to veneration and support, combining an explicit appeal to an established symbol (the figure of the great sage himself, imitated by his successors)

> with an implicit appeal to the powers and attainments of practitioners of the day. My point is this: the magical apparitions and miraculous displays in Mahāyāna *sūtras* are not just some kind of narrative padding or scaffolding for the elaboration of doctrine; they are the very essence of the Mahāyāna's struggle to make a place for itself and to survive in a competitive environment.

The 'radical asceticism' of early Mahāyāna sūtras, and the frequent exhortations to go to the forest/wilderness (notwithstanding the fact that there are some sūtras, such as the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Sūtra* (Conze 1973a: 233), that seem to discourage the move) has also been noted by Gregory Schopen (2005: Ch. 1, esp. pp. 15–17). Schopen suggests that we should therefore look in two directions in any search for early Mahāyāna. On the one hand we have Mahāyāna groups within the existing monasteries, 'marginalized embattled segments still institutionally embedded in the dominant mainstream monastic orders'. On the other hand there 'may have been small, isolated groups living in the forest at odds with, and not necessarily welcomed by, the mainstream monastic orders, having limited access to both patronage and established Buddhist monasteries and sacred sites'. This, Schopen suggests, might explain the absence of inscriptional records and lack of evidence for support of Mahāyāna at established monastic sites for so many centuries.[49] Indeed, even when Mahāyāna does emerge in the sixth century or so as an identifiable group with monasteries associated with it, Mahāyāna is still found in India in peripheral marginal areas with no previous association with Buddhism, or at Buddhist sites that had previously suffered decline (*ibid.*: 14).

So Mahāyāna may well have grown up among – or been significantly influenced by – those who had left the monasteries in order to practise their Buddhism more austerely and more single-mindedly, both in deep meditation and also in the practice of the various ascetic acts (*dhūtaguṇas*) such as dressing only in rags from the dustheap, eating only food gained from alms, and so on. Mahāyāna may have been the result of an austere (perhaps even puritanical) 'revivalist movement' that felt it was returning to the example of the Buddha himself, and the long and painful path he trod to full Buddhahood. In the light of this I want to look briefly here at the picture we get of Mahāyāna practitioners in their broader Buddhist context in three interesting sūtras, at least two of which of which are plausibly quite early in origins.[50]

The first of these is the *Rāṣṭrapālaparipṛcchā Sūtra*. There survive two works with this title in the Mahāyāna sūtra corpus. The first, and much shorter, has been termed by Ensink the 'Minor *Rāṣṭrapālaparipṛcchā*'. It may well be another sūtra that in itself was not in origin anything to do with the Mahāyāna as such.[51] As it stands I suspect it might show a very early phase of Mahāyāna sūtra writing indeed. Although the sūtra appears to mention at one point a monk reflecting whether he wishes to attain the enlightenment of an Arhat or aim for perfect Buddhahood (i.e. become a Bodhisattva; Ensink trans. 1952: 133), in fact it continues as if in reality the answer is obvious, with a description of an austere path for a serious Buddhist monk aiming for Arhatship:

> He must accept the restrictions of the prātimokṣa [monastic code] . . . he must be irreproachable. . . . Being free from passion, free from hate, free from error, he must always have pleasure in solitude . . . and the jungle . . . where there are not many men, abandoned by men, suitable for complete absorption.

He must abstain from commercial activity, or medical studies, not mix with nuns, and not be addicted to chatting. In fact, the monk who really desires to obtain enlightenment should behave according to the pattern that most modern students of Buddhism assume is the norm in practice as well as theory for all Buddhist monks. But clearly it was not the norm in practice at the time this sūtra was composed, since the sūtra continues with a long description of the 'false monk' who does the exact opposite: '[A]ttached to riches . . . acquainted with women . . . acquainted with householders, in that fool who has thus become acquainted (with those persons) where is the ascetic life!'. They do wicked things like owning property, engaging in trade, and 'sitting apart' they expound the Buddhist teachings to women. And they criticize the solitary ascetic life. They are hypocrites, who destroy the teaching of the Buddha. Worse, '[s]poiling the doctrine, they utter criticism regarding the Mahāyāna' (*ibid*.: 138). This is the one and only mention of the Mahāyāna in the sūtra itself, but it seems clear that 'Mahāyāna' here cannot refer to Mahāyāna contrasted with Hīnayāna as such, nor even the Bodhisattvayāna contrasted with the Śrāvakayāna, since the sūtra's description of a good monk was framed explicitly in terms not of the Bodhisattva on the way to Buddhahood but rather the Śrāvakayāna path to Arhatship. It seems that 'Mahāyāna' here must simply mean the way of those who are serious Buddhist practitioners aiming for the actual goal of Buddhism, as taught by the Buddha himself. In other words, 'Mahāyāna' is just the way of good, virtuous, monks – of course, the authors of this sūtra – contrasted with the majority who are wicked monks, hypocrites who are destroying the Dharma. And that, perhaps, was the original meaning of 'Mahāyāna'. Mahāyāna was simply honest, true, Buddhism as seen by those revivalists who, protesting against what they saw as a corrupting worldliness among their fellow monks, wanted to return to their idea of the original Buddhism of the Buddha. That the Buddhism of the Buddha became identified with the way the Buddha himself followed, the Bodhisattva path, alongside and eventually in contradistinction to the path to Arhatship, may possibly have been a subsequent phase in the early development of Mahāyāna's self-awareness, a phase encouraged over time by the constant affirmation and repetition of being on a 'Mahāyāna', contrasted with those who were clearly not.

I want to move now to *the* Mahāyāna *Rāṣṭrapālaparipṛcchā Sūtra*, the sūtra scholars tend to think of when they refer to a text by this name. It is quite possible that it was composed on the basis of the so-called 'Minor *Rāṣṭrapālaparipṛcchā*'. Unless a monk unrepentantly considered himself attacked by the latter, the 'Minor *Rāṣṭrapālaparipṛcchā*' was a sūtra that could be plausibly represented to all as the genuine word of the Buddha and a candidate for inclusion in a Mainstream Buddhist canon in a way that might be much more problematic for more overtly (and probably later) Mahāyāna sūtras. The longer *Rāṣṭrapālaparipṛcchā*

is clearly a Mahāyāna sūtra in a much more self-aware sense of the term, and it reads as an extensive Mahāyāna elaboration of the 'Minor *Rāṣṭrapālaparipṛcchā*'. The good monks are now quite clearly Bodhisattvas, on the path to Buddhahood – although it does not follow for this sūtra that any Bodhisattva is thereby automatically a 'good monk', for Bodhisattvas can be hypocrites too. There is much more detail here on the importance of the good Bodhisattva dwelling in the forest or wilderness, living an austere life and practising the ascetic practices, and there are more details on the many pitfalls that Bodhisattvas should avoid in their spiritual path. But the most notorious feature of the longer *Rāṣṭrapālaparipṛcchā* is its extended polemic on the decline of the Buddhist Order, the evils of the wicked monks, and their oppressive conduct (indeed persecution) towards virtuous Bodhisattvas who try to live the Buddha's pure life. These evil monks 'are unbelieving, indolent, their mind is always confused; they are also conceited and always angry. And whenever they see a patient bhikṣu absorbed in meditation they will expel him from the monastery, beating him with a stick' (*ibid.*: 18–19). The sūtra leaves its readers in no doubt that such hypocritical evil monks are heading for hell. It has the Buddha say so a number of times.[52] It is perhaps significant, too, that the *Rāṣṭrapālaparipṛcchā* is one of those frequent Mahāyāna sūtras that incorporate a number of references to jātaka-type tales, since reflection on the actions of the Buddha in his previous lives may well have been an important impetus to the development of the Bodhisattva path and the superiority of a Buddha over Arhats.[53] Certainly in this sūtra we find a whole series of references (*ibid.*: 21 ff.) to the impressively virtuous doings of Śākyamuni in previous lives, intended to show not only how wonderful a Buddha must be, how difficult his path is, but both how he contrasts with the evil monks of the present decadent epoch, and also no doubt how he serves as a model and clan-leader for the poor persecuted Bodhisattvas behind the sūtra itself. Indeed, the praising of the qualities of the Buddha, and his supramundane greatness, seems to be a particular feature of this sūtra, presumably again because of the contrast this provides with contemporary 'wicked monks'. And in what is perhaps an allusion to the accepted criteria for appraising whether a teaching heard is a genuine 'word of the Buddha' or not (see above) the sūtra has the Buddha continuing (*ibid.*: 28–9; punctuation slightly altered):

> Such are the noble vows that I have observed during my career. But they [the evil monks], hearing this wondrous account, will find no pleasure in a single word.
>
> There will be laughter then, when they have heard this and this teaching. They are intent on food and sexual intercourse, always overcome by indolence, wicked crows, hating the Doctrine, always vulgar, spoiling the Doctrine, destitute of virtues. Having heard this tranquil Doctrine, they say: 'This is not the word of the Victorious One.
>
> I had a teacher, an ocean of learning, very learned, the best of narrators, and he has denied this: "This is not the word of the Buddha."
>
> Moreover he had an old master, who had conquered the flood of virtues, and he too did not accept this: "Do not apply yourself to this; it is wrong. . . .

> Fables, which people with wicked thoughts, heterodox thoughts, invented themselves! Never will the Victorious Ones say this word, which is only the discourse of bhikṣus."'
>
> Deprived of shame and good conduct, impudent like crows, haughty and impetuous the bhikṣus of my Doctrine will be, aflame with jealousy, self-conceit and presumption. . . .
>
> As cattle, such as cows, asses and horses is given to them, they also get slaves, continually the mind of those vulgar men is intent on ploughing and the practices of trade. . . .
>
> And, having seen bhikṣus who are rich in virtues [i.e. the sūtra's Bodhisattvas], they speak ill even of them. And, having entered, those ill-behaved, crafty deceivers, those most hideous men, ruin the women.[54]

Such wicked monks, we are told, grant no favours to 'those who are well-conducted and virtuous, supporters of the Doctrine, devoted to the interest of mankind, always applying themselves to self-control and restraint'. The true Bodhisattvas, on the other hand, being despised will leave the villages and retreat to the forests on the borders of the country (*ibid.*: 30–1).[55] Another sūtra, the *Sūryagarbha Sūtra*, describes how the virtuous monks will appeal to the laity to drive out an evil monk. Supposing however the laity side with the evil monk, the virtuous monks should not display anger but simply leave. They will live instead in the wilderness, the jungle, or in the mountains (even a mountain village) – anywhere where they can practise their meditation in peace.[56]

The evil monks are said to show no respect for the monastic code (*prātimokṣa*),[57] and yet perhaps paradoxically they are also said in the *Rāṣṭrapālaparipṛcchā* to be esteemed as teachers by people (*ibid.*: 31; presumably by the laity). This indeed just adds to their conceit. It is far too large a topic for the present context, but that there is a different side to the picture of contemporary Buddhist monasticism portrayed by the *Rāṣṭrapālaparipṛcchā* has begun to emerge from work done by Gregory Schopen (notably the papers reprinted in Schopen 2004a) on the corpus of monastic codes (*Vinaya*). We now know that monks in India plausibly at the time of the emergence of early Mahāyāna and anyway in the following centuries – 'good', knowledgeable, literate monks – simply did not, e.g., spend their time entirely engaged in meditation, live an exceptionally austere life, abandon all use of money or indeed all private wealth, and engage in intensive study. The monasteries, for example, held what appear to be public auctions of the property of a dead monk (2004a: Ch. 3, p. 45). Monks could inherit and have absolute possession of family property. Some monks – Schopen suggests possibly many – were quite rich (*ibid.*: 187). We now know that Buddhist monasteries in ancient India also possessed slaves.[58] And the monastic sources seek severely to restrict ascetic monks. For, as regards the view of monks found in the Vinayas,

> normal monks lived in monasteries and had free access to and use of monastic property and objects of worship; they lived communally and could interact with the laity. The norm here, the ideal, is not of ascetic practice but of sedentary, socially engaged, permanently housed monasticism.
>
> (Schopen 2004a: 92–3)

As Schopen also puts it,

> Monasteries . . . are presented here [in his sources] primarily not as residences for monks to live in but as potential and permanent sources of merit for their donors . . . monks [were] under heavy obligations . . . not determined by the religious life or needs of monks but by the religious needs of donors.
>
> (Schopen 2004a: 245)

Monks were obliged by their own monastic rule to accept gifts of property from donors: 'For these monks . . . the primary role of their fellow Buddhist monks was not to "work out their own salvation with diligence" but to diligently generate merit for lay donors by using what they provided or what belonged to them' (*ibid.*: 245–6). The sources suggest that it is the ascetic hermit monks who, in their search for 'Buddhahood for the benefit of all sentient beings' and their deep meditation 'out of compassion for others', were thought to be prone to neglecting their duties as monks not only to the upkeep of the monastery and the use of monastic donations – thus ensuring the continuation of the Buddhist Dharma and continued merit for the donors – but also neglecting their duties through cultic activities and merit for the welfare of their families, and their ancestors, as well as helping through teaching the wider lay group on which they depended for support. The attitude of extant monastic sources to the earnest forest meditators, who were perhaps themselves felt to be rather conceited, was one of ambivalence and sometimes ridicule.[59] Ascetic forest meditators, it is implied, incline to self-indulgent neglect of their duties to others, others upon whom the whole of Buddhist monasticism depended for support and survival. And, as Schopen has demonstrated (e.g. *ibid.*: 96, 157–8, Schopen 1997: Ch. 10), the avoidance of social censure by the wider lay community was of paramount importance in Indian Buddhist monasticism. Perhaps it is within this social context that we should seek to understand the constant Mahāyāna emphasis on how, through following the Mahāyāna, one follows the path of the compassionate Buddha himself. It is an austere path of inner development that may not issue immediately in social benefits – Mahāyāna in ancient India was a matter of meditation and cultic practice, not social work – but nevertheless the Mahāyāna is finally a path to Buddhahood 'for the benefit of all sentient beings'.[60]

Let us move now to look briefly in this context at another Mahāyāna sūtra that is thought to be quite early in origin, the *Ugraparipṛcchā Sūtra*. This is a sūtra that has recently become well-known among scholars for its description of what was involved in being a *lay* Bodhisattva.[61] It was serious business. Lay bodhisattvas were not ordinary Buddhist laity, but semi-renunciate specialists who had taken specific vows and lived very austerely indeed. There is no suggestion that being a lay Bodhisattva, let alone a monastic Bodhisattva, was some sort of easy path. It is taken for granted that he is a family man, but the lay Bodhisattva (who is therefore male) is left in no doubt that women are a hindrance in the spiritual path, he should now be celibate, and he is exhorted to see his wife as an enemy or executioner, a burden, and destined for hell (Nattier 2003a: 249–50). He should be

detached from his son (he too is referred to at one point as an enemy), replacing fondness for his son with the spirit of loving kindness for all sentient beings (*ibid.*: 256).[62] The lay Bodhisattva spends much of his time visiting monasteries, and admonishing others to take up Buddhist practices. He must make sure he admonishes absolutely everyone in the village or town, or he will be blamed by the Buddhas (*ibid.*: 236). One gets the impression such an earnest and self-righteous Bodhisattva might make himself something of a public nuisance, a point rather confirmed by the annoyingly persistent and hence persecuted Bodhisattva Sadāparibhūta in the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka Sūtra* (see Chapter 7 below). The Bodhisattva is hence an exemplary lay Mahāyāna Buddhist, exemplary in many ways precisely inasmuch as he emulates as far as possible in his lay state the life of a Buddhist monk.

But really, the *Ugraparipṛcchā Sūtra* suggests, the lay Bodhisattva should become a monk himself. No lay Bodhisattva, it is asserted, has ever become a Buddha while in the lay state.[63] Accordingly the sūtra shows considerable respect for Buddhist monks, and indeed even those on the Śrāvakayāna path to Arhatship, in a way that contrasts with the antagonistic approach to the Śrāvakayāna found in some (later?) Mahāyāna sūtras (e.g. *ibid.*: 218–19; cf. Harrison 1987; 2005b reprint: 115). It is suggested that the Bodhisattva path is not suitable for all. It is one vehicle, the supreme vehicle to Buddhahood, but it is not the only vehicle for a good Buddhist. Since to become a Buddha is the very peak of attainment, it is portrayed as an *elite* path, a path only for those who can undertake the long and arduous route through the many, many, rebirths necessary in order to achieve the complete perfection of wisdom and compassion that issues in Buddhahood.

We find in the *Ugraparipṛcchā Sūtra* that there are among the monks *in the monastery itself* Bodhisattva monks, as well as mainstream monks following the Śrāvakayāna. Clearly, then, Buddhist monasteries as represented by the *Ugraparipṛcchā Sūtra* contained both Bodhisattvas and those monks following the path to Arhatship. Moreover the monasteries also contain among their members, and presumably in some sense as inhabitants of the monastery, ascetic hermit *dhūtaguṇa* monks as well. These are described as occupying specialist positions within the monastery (*ibid.*: 274). Thus the polarized antagonism of the *Rāṣṭrapālaparipṛcchā* is not borne out by the *Ugraparipṛcchā Sūtra*. The suggestion therefore is that at different times and places in ancient India the scenario on the ground in terms of early Mahāyāna and its relationship to ascetic hermits, and their relationships with established Buddhist monasticism, may have been a fluctuating and variable one.[64] Having said that, a great deal of space is taken up in this sūtra describing the advantages of serious practice as a forest/wilderness hermit, and what it involves. So the overall direction of the *Ugraparipṛcchā Sūtra* is from austere devoted lay Bodhisattva practice through to monastic ordination and eventually to serious and sustained practice as a forest hermit, whether or not that involves occasional controlled interaction with the 'home' monastery (cf. *ibid.*: 289–90). And as a forest hermit the ideal is severely restricted contact with others. It is clear that as far as this sūtra is concerned being a serious Bodhisattva practising according to the ideal

is a matter of isolation from other people.[65] It is nothing to do with social engagement, social action, or being a 'do-gooder', even though it is granted that eventually, when perfection has been attained, the wilderness monk will finally return to the world in order to preach the Dharma. That, after all, is what the Buddha did himself.[66]

Finally, I want to draw attention to a partially contrasting picture of forest/wilderness hermits and their relationship to village monks that we get from a little-known Mahāyāna sūtra, the *Sarvadharmāpravṛttinirdeśa*. This sūtra has come to the attention of scholars recently because of the discovery, in Afghanistan, of a series of fragments from the lost Sanskrit text, perhaps originally from a Mahāsāṃghika library. They are now preserved in Oslo with other Buddhist fragments from Afghanistan, including those from a number of Mahāyāna sūtras, in what is known as the 'Schøyen Collection'. The *Sarvadharmāpravṛttinirdeśa Sūtra* was not a particularly important Mahāyāna sūtra, and it may not be particularly early. But it does contain some interesting material for our purposes.

This sūtra seems to emphasize a critique not so much of non-Mahāyānists who reject the Mahāyāna but rather of other Mahāyānists who in the eyes of the sūtra are only playing at following the Mahāyāna and have not really understood and do not put into practice what it is truly all about.[67] Among those criticized are forest hermit monks themselves, and they are criticized in another jātaka-type story. A certain monk spends his time not in meditation but travelling from village to village preaching to the laity out of compassion. He is a 'Dharma-preacher' (*dharmabhāṇaka*). He is accused in this respect by a forest hermit who loves meditation. This forest hermit is described as having supremely pure morality, supernormal knowledge and powers, and he is a formidable ascetic. He is a Bodhisattva, and an expert in meditative absorption. He has founded his own monastery, where he stays in meditation. The hermit and his disciples never go on the alms round in the villages (thus depriving the villagers of the merit of giving to particularly austere and virtuous Buddhist monks), and they think it is quite wrong to go into a town or village: 'The Lord has admonished us and praised us that we should live in seclusion'. But it is the hermit, who considers the monk who visits villages and mixes with laity to be possessed of impure morality, who falls to hell after death, while the altruistic preacher is revealed to be the Buddha in a previous life (Braarvig 2000: 130–1; cf. also Karashima 2001: 159–60). One implication of this, drawn out by the sūtra, is that the hermit monk had not only missed the real significance of compassion but he also failed to understand the purport of central Mahāyāna ideas like emptiness (*q.v.*) in his rigid holding on to concepts and judgemental accusations.[68]

From all of this we can see (cf. Karashima 2001: 161) that at least by the time of this sūtra forest hermit monks were founding (and therefore were the owners of) their own monasteries in the forest. Of course, we need not assume that the monasteries were large institutions, but they were institutions nevertheless, and may have housed several monks around a teacher who was perhaps particularly noted for his accomplishment and teaching in meditation. This might explain the emphasis in several important Mahāyāna sūtras (often reflected in their titles) on distinctive meditative absorptions (*samādhi*; e.g. *Samādhirāja Sūtra*).

Moreover there were also Dharma-preachers who travelled from village to village but who stayed sometimes at forest monasteries too. Forest hermits and village monks – or at least monks who visited villages – were not as distinct and separate as is sometimes thought to be the case. We can see as well in this sūtra criticism of forest hermits, at least inasmuch as forest hermits demonstrate a certain conceit and accuse Bodhisattvas who preach in villages of impure or lesser practice of Buddhism. One cannot assume that the paradigmatic way to Buddhahood lies in dwelling in relative seclusion in the forest, and one cannot take it for granted that a preaching monk has not progressed very far in the Bodhisattva path. After all, it was the forest hermits in these stories who fell to hell, while the very one they accused is now the Buddha himself.

Hence the *Sarvadharmāpravṛttinirdeśa Sūtra* allows us to hypothesize that as time passed the Mahāyāna, which probably originated among antisocial forest hermits with the idea of returning to what was seen as the ascetic spirit of the Buddha himself, eventually became itself institutionalized in relationship precisely to and with the wider lay society that it originally renounced. And it may be precisely at this time, several hundred years after its origins, that Mahāyāna began to have a more visible impact 'on the ground' in India. To quote Schopen (2004b: 494–5):

> At this point we can only postulate that the Mahāyāna may have had a visible impact in India only when, in the fifth century, it had become what it had originally most strongly objected to: a fully landed, sedentary, lay-oriented monastic institution – the first mention of Mahāyāna in an Indian inscription occurs, in fact, in the record of a large grant of land to a Mahāyāna monastery. In the meantime the Mahāyāna may well have been either a collection of marginalized ascetic groups living in the forest, or groups of cantankerous and malcontent conservatives embedded in mainstream, socially engaged monasteries, all of whom continued pouring out pamphlets espousing their views and values, pamphlets that we now know as Mahāyāna sūtras.[69]

The justification of the Mahāyāna sūtras

Lastly, what justification could possibly be given by Mahāyānists for the creation of the Mahāyāna sūtras, sūtras attributed (surely falsely) in the main to the Buddha himself?[70] We have seen already that as far as the non-Mahāyāna Mainstream Buddhist traditions were concerned the Mahāyāna sūtras were not the words of the Buddha but rather the work of poets and fabricators. In the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā* (8,000-verse) *Perfection of Wisdom*, Mahāyānists are warned to be on their guard against this accusation, since it comes from Māra, the Buddhist Tempter (MacQueen 2005a: 313; 1981: 304). Nevertheless, we should not think that, even for Buddhist traditions that were not involved with and were unsympathetic to Mahāyāna, all the works forming the sūtra section of the Canon were considered actually to have been uttered by the Buddha himself. What was necessary for a text not uttered by the Buddha himself to receive full authority was that the Buddha

personally certified the utterance concerned. Graeme MacQueen, in a long and interesting article, speaks of three types of certification recognized among the Mainstream Buddhist traditions: approval after the event, approval before the event, and authorization of persons.[71] Thus the Buddha approves of something someone has preached, or invites a person to preach on his behalf, or a teaching is given by a preacher who has been authorized by the Buddha, in the sense that the preacher has been praised by the Lord for his wisdom and ability. The important point about all of these forms of certification is the requirement of the Buddha's presence in the world. With the death of the Buddha and his immediate disciples, therefore, the Canon in theory becomes closed. It thus follows that any development of a doctrine that the Buddha remains in compassionate contact with the world, as occurs in Mahāyāna, carries with it the possibility of the creation of a new 'mystically authorized' canon of scriptures.

Most Mahāyānists consider that the Mahāyāna sūtras were preached in one way or another by Śākyamuni Buddha, the 'historical' Buddha, and the sūtras themselves almost invariably start with Ānanda's phrase 'Thus have I heard at one time', plus the geographical location of the discourse. However, source-critical and historical awareness has made it impossible for the modern scholar to accept this traditional account. Nevertheless, it is not always absurd to suggest that a Mahāyāna sūtra or teaching may contain elements of a tradition which goes back to the Buddha himself, which was played down or just possibly excluded from the canonical formulations of the early schools. We have seen that even at the First Council there is evidence of disagreement as regards the details of the Buddha's teaching. Luis Gómez (1976) has detected in one of the earliest sections of the Pali Canon, the *Sutta Nipāta*, teachings close enough to those found in the Mādhyamika philosophy, usually associated with Mahāyāna, to justify the name 'Proto-Mādhyamika'. Mādhyamika seems to represent the philosophical systematization and development of the Prajñāpāramitā (Perfection of Wisdom) sūtras, and it is not absurd to see in the Prajñāpāramitā a protest against what were thought of as the innovations of certain Abhidharma developments and scholars, and perhaps an attempt to return to a perceived earlier understanding of the Dharma and the world.

More important, however, is a tradition found in the Mahāyāna sūtras themselves which would associate the origins of these texts not with the historical Buddha who died, perhaps, sometime in the fifth or the fourth century BCE, but rather with visionary experience of and inspiration by one of a number of Buddhas who continue to exist on a higher plane, in their Buddha Fields or Pure Lands (cf. MacQueen 2005b: 327 ff.; 1982: 51 ff.). This teaching, which to my mind provides a convincing basis for understanding the origins of at least some of the Mahāyāna sūtras, can be found stated particularly vividly in the *Pratyutpanna Sūtra*. The central message of this sūtra concerns a meditation practice whereby the meditator recollects a Buddha (Amitāyus is particularly mentioned), visualizing him in his Pure Land surrounded by Bodhisattvas and preaching the Doctrine. The practitioner concentrates day and night for some seven days. After this, not surprisingly perhaps, he sees the Buddha in a vision or in a dream:

> [W]hile remaining in this very world-system . . . those *bodhisattvas* see that Lord and *Tathāgata* Amitāyus, perceive themselves as being in that world-system, and also hear the Dharma. And they retain, master, and preserve those dharmas after hearing them expounded. They honour, revere, venerate and worship that Lord . . . Amitāyus. And on emerging from that *samādhi* [meditative absorption] the *bodhisattvas* also expound at length to others those dharmas, just as they have heard, retained and mastered them.[72]

It is possible to question the Buddha while in this absorption, and: 'Further . . . undeclared, unobtained words of the Dharma come within the range of hearing of that bodhisattva, and he acquires them; by the power of that *samādhi* that bodhisattva hears those dharmas'.[73] We have here, therefore, a theory of the revelatory origin of Mahāyāna sūtras, a theory based on the teaching (or perhaps contributing to the origination of the teaching) that the (or 'a') Buddha remains in his Pure Land teaching the Dharma.[74]

Recently Paul Harrison (2003: esp. 117–22) has expanded on the importance of appreciating the deep, sustained, and prolonged meditation practices apparently undertaken by the forest hermit monks who were behind the production of many of the early Mahāyāna sūtras. He suggests approaching Buddhist texts (even including philosophical texts) with consideration of their meditative context.[75] Harrison draws attention, for example, to the ways in which early Mahāyāna sūtras centred on Pure Lands, such as the *Sukhāvatīvyūha* or *Akṣobhyavyūha Sūtras*, provide prescriptions for concentrated visualization, visualizing the Buddha with whom the meditator wishes to make contact – to 'visit' – in his Pure Land, effectively constructing the Pure Land in the mind of the meditator, and replacing or substituting an alternative 'pure world' for the contaminated world of everyday life.[76] Such texts are not simply read. They are, as it were, like music scores *performed*. And it is within this sort of context of intensive meditative transformation of reality that we can begin to understand a text like the *Sarvapuṇyasamuccayasamādhi Sūtra* that speaks of Bodhisattvas discovering 'treasures of the dharma' deposited inside mountains, caves and trees, and tells us that 'endless dharma-teachings in book-form come into their hands' (*ibid.*: 125).[77]

There are other early Mahāyāna sūtras, however, that speak not of books appearing in the hands, or being found in caves, or receiving direct teachings from a Buddha seen in a vision, but rather of *deities*, supernatural beings (including, not inappropriately for a forest meditator, tree spirits), visiting the forest-dwelling hermit meditator and giving them significant revelations. These supernatural beings are found throughout Buddhism, and characteristically often visit at night, frequently just before dawn. Their visits and 'admonishment' are generally viewed positively by the tradition, and Harrison points out that even the Mainstream Buddhist canons have in them teachings preached by deities under such circumstances and accepted as the authentic 'word of the Buddha'.

Visits by deities just before dawn suggests the revelatory significance of dreams.[78] Harrison points out that Mainstream Buddhist sources show little interest in dream prac-

tice, or the spiritual significance of dreams and their interpretation. The situation is quite different in the Mahāyāna, and Harrison draws attention to an early Mahāyāna sūtra (composed before the second half of the third century CE) with a particular interest in dreams, the *Āryasvapnanirdeśa*. This sūtra lists and interprets 108 dream signs. Most of these are of Buddhist religious figures and activities (Harrison 2003: 136–7):

> Among them we find listed dreams of hearing the Dharma being taught (No. 22), meeting hitherto unknown monks who preach the Dharma (*dharmabhāṇaka-bhikṣu*) (24), seeing the Buddha teaching the Dharma (29), receiving a book (56) . . . hearing the name of a Dharma treasure (63), hearing the name of a Tathāgata [Buddha] in another world (64), and hearing the name of bodhisattva so-and-so in another world. . . . [O]ne can also have dreams in which one perceives oneself enthroned on the Dharma-seat and teaching the Dharma (25), . . . gaining the inspiration (*pratibhāna*) to produce sūtras (62), or teaching the Dharma to a large crowd of people (95).

And Harrison suggests that when Buddhist practitioners spent a lot of their waking time involved in rehearsing texts, it is not perhaps surprising that they might have dreamed of doing so, and in the creative context of dreaming that they came to consider they were receiving new revelations. Harrison concludes (2003: 142):

> What I am suggesting here, then, is a convergence of meditation and textual transmission in the forest environment, stimulated into a new burst of creativity as a result of a technological development, the advent of writing. Here the specific circumstances of the real world combine with visions in deep states of meditation or dream to transform received oral tradition into a new kind of Buddhism. The resulting revelations are not completely novel, but deeply conditioned by context and by tradition. Although dismissed as poetic fabrications . . . or even demonically inspired nonsense by their opponents . . . they are in fact creative recasting of material already accepted as authentic buddhavacana ['words of the Buddha'] by the wider community.[79]

Before leaving this topic, however, let us just note a justification for the Mahāyāna sūtras internal to the Mahāyāna tradition itself and separate but not necessarily contradictory to the theory of revelation. This is found in a sūtra quoted by Śāntideva in his *Śikṣāsamuccaya* (eighth century CE):

> Through four factors is an inspired utterance [*pratibhāna*; see MacQueen] the word of the Buddhas. What four? (i) . . . the inspired utterance is connected with truth, not untruth; (ii) it is connected with the Dharma, not that which is not the Dharma; (iii) it brings about the renunciation of moral taints [*kleśa*] not their increase; and (iv) it shows the laudable qualities of nirvāṇa, not those of the cycle of rebirth [saṃsāra].
>
> (Śāntideva 1961: 12)

The sūtra explains that if an utterance has these four features then the believing men and women of a good family (an expression used for the hearers of Mahāyāna sūtras) will form

the conception of 'Buddha' and hear it as the Dharma. Why? 'Whatever is well spoken [*subhāṣita*], all that is the word of the Buddha [*buddhabhāṣita*].'

This apparent openness as to what is to count as the word of the Buddha can be traced in the Pali Canon, for the assertion that what is well spoken is the word of the Buddha is also found in the Pali *Uttaravipatti Sutta* (cf. Aśoka's 'Whatever is spoken by the Lord Buddha, all that is well said'). There may be here, however, a certain ambiguity:

> [It] can mean that all of the good things in the tradition come from the Buddha, but it can equally well imply that *buddhavacana* [the Buddha's discourse] is being redefined to mean 'whatsoever be well spoken', rather than meaning the actual words of Gautama.
>
> (MacQueen 2005a: 323; 1981: 314)

Nevertheless elsewhere too in the Pali Canon the Dhamma is characterized effectively as whichever doctrines lead to enlightenment.[80] Of course, to say that whatsoever is well spoken is the word of the Buddha is not to explain exactly what is to count as being well spoken. It is not enough to say that it leads to nirvāṇa, since opinions will differ as to which processes and practices will lead thither. Even the standard source among the Mainstream Buddhist traditions on what is to count as an authentic scriptural text, the *Mahāpadeśa Sūtra*, is of little concrete help in the examination of a disputed case. As we have seen above, this sūtra recommends relying not on the authority of a person or persons as such, but on checking the new text for coherence with the authentic Sūtra and Vinaya corpus.[81] However, as we have also seen, the Canon was not in a stable state during the centuries after the death of the Buddha, nor was it clear and unambiguous. Nevertheless perhaps the framework was there, a framework that could be exploited, developed and systematized by the Mahāyāna, for innovation on the basis of spiritual efficacy.

The Mahāyāna took up the Buddha's assertion that the Dharma should guide his followers after his death, and stressed that the Lord had described the Dharma as whatever leads to enlightenment, that is, whatever is spiritually helpful. What is spiritually helpful will vary considerably, depending on person, time, and place. As time, place, and person change, so some sort of innovation becomes inevitable. The only problem lies in justifying that innovation. Some Mahāyāna scriptures may indeed have circulated originally not attributed to the Buddha himself, or spoken of as actually sūtras, but rather held to be treatises of other named individuals who were thought to be great masters and whose teaching or lineage was particularly efficacious in following the path to enlightenment. As time passed (and perhaps also as these writings were found to have increasing spiritual value or prestige) they were subject to a process of 'sūtrafication'. This involved introducing into them the textual elements that would enable them to be given the highest prestige and classed as *buddhavacana* itself. Often that meant attributing the teachings either directly to the Buddha or adding his endorsement explicitly in the context of a sūtra.[82]

Looked at another way, in a sense, it could be argued that for the Mainstream Buddhist traditions to urge against the Mahāyāna that it is not the word of the Buddha is to

miss the point. The actual historical Buddha had declined in significance in favour of, first, the principles which he enunciated and which he set forth as their guide after his death, and second, as time passed the growing importance of the (or a) continuing Buddha of visions on a plane different from and spiritually more refined than this world occupied by Śākyamuni Buddha as a figure in human history. In the light of this second point, to appeal to the historical Buddha may in some circles have come to be thought of as an appeal to that which is in a sense inferior.

Let me now summarize briefly the direction of the preceding discussion. From about the first century BCE the changes occurring within Buddhism seem to have issued in a new literature claiming to be the word of the Buddha himself. This literature is not the product of an organized or unitary movement, and appears to have been produced by monks well within the existing Buddhist traditions. Much of the literature is concerned with the supremacy of the Buddha and his perception of things, and advocates the path of the Bodhisattva, the aspirant to full Buddhahood, as a noble and higher path to be pursued by all who can. As aiming at Buddhahood this was frequently said to be for the benefit not just of the practitioner himself but for all sentient beings. The production of these sūtras, at least in part, seems to have had something to do with the activities of forest hermit monks. The monks, nuns, and perhaps a small number of lay practitioners who accepted this new literature may have formed a series of Mahāyāna or Bodhisattva-type groups, probably based on different sūtras and their attendant practices. It is likely that for some time they had little or no direct and regular connection with each other, and how much they had in common still remains unclear. In some cases the followers may have felt themselves in direct contact with a Buddha, or perhaps some other supernatural source, who inspired them in meditation visions or in dreams. Sometimes they proclaimed the Doctrine itself, embodied in the text, as the body of the Buddha, his Dharma-body, superior to that found and worshipped in stūpas. Our early Mahāyānists may certainly have perceived themselves as a righteous bulwark against moral and spiritual decline. The evidence suggests that, whether in established monasteries or in forest hermitages, these enthusiasts were very much in the minority within Indian Buddhism. It appears to have been some centuries before the followers of the Mahāyāna began to identify themselves in everyday life as in the fullest sense a distinctive group within Buddhism, and it is not clear how far in general they differed throughout this period in public (as opposed to group cult or individual) behaviour from non-Mahāyāna practitioners. As time passed Mahāyānists identified their aspirations more and more clearly as a 'Mahāyāna', a Superior Way, and eventually the literature begins to show greater animosity towards those who failed to heed or understand properly the Mahāyāna message. In time animosity also grew particularly towards those who failed to appreciate and themselves adopt the Mahāyāna and still insisted on following what was now said to be an 'Inferior Way', a Hīnayāna. Eventually, after what was in historical terms a considerable time from its origins, we begin to find monasteries associated with a self-conscious 'Mahāyāna' affiliation, and perhaps (although this is by no means clear) it was from this time onwards that more overt cultic activities such as public devotion to

Buddhas and great Bodhisattvas began to take place. Thence we find the seventh-century CE Chinese pilgrim's observation (quoted above) that the Mahāyānists were the ones who 'worship the Bodhisattvas'. Even so, it seems that fewer than 50 per cent of the monks encountered by Xuanzang (Hsüan-tsang; *c*. 600–664) on his visit to India actually were Mahāyānists.

With this as an introduction, let us now begin to look at the sūtras themselves.

2 *The* Perfection of Wisdom (Prajñāpāramitā) Sūtras

On the Mahāyāna sūtras

In approaching the Mahāyāna sūtras we immediately confront presuppositions concerning the nature of the book which these texts put into question. The sūtra is not one object among others, but rather may be seen as a body of the Buddha, a focus of celebration and worship on the model of relic worship.[1] The book is not a free-standing, self-explanatory item, but an entity embedded in religious practice, a product of and a guide to spiritual experience. Those of the modern westernized world expect a book, perhaps, to lead through systematic and clearly defined stages from a beginning through a middle to a conclusion. Reading, we think, is a private, solitary affair, requiring peace, leisure, and silence. But the landscape of the Mahāyāna sūtras is quite extraordinary, space and time expand and conflate, connections seem to be missed, we move abruptly from ideas so compressed and arcane as to verge on the meaningless, to page after page of repetition. If we approach books as a consumer, regarding texts as goods to be devoured one after the other from cover to cover, then all too often we find the Mahāyāna sūtras boring – about as boring as a board game for which we have only the rules, lacking pieces and the board.

In fact the study of a Buddhist sūtra was neither private nor peaceful. Certainly in classical times in India the text would be copied and read, but reading was perhaps closer to chanting out loud (widespread mastery of the art of silent reading is a relatively recent development in world culture). Each Buddhist monk would probably own no more than one or two sūtras, which would rapidly be learnt by heart, not only through frequent repetition but because memory of the texts was demanded by the scholastic environment. Moreover the sūtras and their exegetical treatises were sometimes guides to meditation.[2] Meditation cannot be performed effectively through repeated glances at a series of written instructions. It is likely that Buddhist texts were intended as no more than mnemonic devices, scaffolding, the framework for textual exposition by a teacher in terms of his own experience and also the tradition, the transmission from his teachers, traced back to the Buddha himself, or to a Buddha, or to some other form of authorized spiritual revelation. This approach to, and treatment of, the sacred text in Buddhism is not only of historical interest. In traditional cultures dominated by Mahāyāna these texts are still used and studied in the

age-old way. The scholar who would write a study of Buddhist practice or even doctrine without bearing this in mind is like an art historian who would study architecture by ignoring the building and looking only at the bricks.

The Mahāyāna sūtras vary in length from a few words to, say, the *Hundred Thousand Verse (Śatasāhasrikā) Perfection of Wisdom*.[3] The larger sūtras are often very repetitive and although as yet adequate editions of most of the sūtras are almost entirely lacking (where the Sanskrit version has survived at all) it is nevertheless possible through careful text-critical scholarship to detect the growth of the sūtras over the centuries, although exact details are very much open to dispute. It would be wrong, therefore, to think of the larger sūtras as we now have them as necessarily historically and conceptually unitary phenomena. Because the sūtras grew and developed, often over some time, we should likewise not necessarily expect to find one consistent and systematic doctrine throughout a particular sūtra. This is not to say, however, that the Buddhist tradition has not been able subsequently to interpret a sūtra in a unitary manner.

A feature of the earlier sūtras is the phenomenon of laudatory self reference – the lengthy praise of the sūtra itself, the immense merits to be obtained from treating even a verse of it with reverence, and the nasty penalties which will accrue in accordance with karma to those who denigrate the scripture. We find similar indications of the historical reception of relatively early Mahāyāna in a famous passage in the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka (Lotus) Sūtra*, where 5,000 of those in the assembly walk out rather than listen to the preaching of the sūtra, because of their 'deep and grave roots of sin and overweening pride, imagining themselves to have attained and to have borne witness to what in fact they had not' (Hurvitz 1976: 29). Not infrequently, as we have already seen, the sūtra itself has one group of monks declaring to another that this sūtra is not the word of the Buddha, together with the reply of the sūtra's partisans.

Sometimes stories or sermons which must have originally circulated separately, products, perhaps, of a different intellectual milieu, are inserted into the text. It is occasionally possible to detect short insertions by comparison of the prose and the verse versions of a particular episode, for many of the sūtras have both. At one time scholars were of the view that the verses tended to be the older. The metric form prevents easy tampering, and it is possible sometimes to detect archaic or nonstandard linguistic features which indicate, together with other clues, that a number of the early Mahāyāna sūtras were not originally in Sanskrit at all, but in a Middle Indic dialect which has been subsequently sanskritized – not always very well from a classical point of view. Nowadays, however, scholars are less sure that the verses are usually earlier than the prose sections of Mahāyāna sūtras. Jan Nattier (2003a: 43–4) has pointed out, for example, that the earliest Chinese translations of both the *Kāśyapaparivarta* and the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* lack verses that are found in the later Chinese translations or the Tibetan versions and (where available) the extant Sanskrit. This suggests that one of the ways in which these sūtras grew was through adding verses.[4] Occasionally a number of different sūtras have been gathered together and referred to as one conglomerate sūtra, as in the case of the *Mahāratnakūṭa Sūtra*, or the

Avataṃsaka Sūtra. There is evidence, moreover, that the Chinese in particular were so impressed with the Mahāyāna sūtras that they created a number of sūtras of their own, some of which have been of considerable importance in the development of Chinese Buddhism. The great Japanese Zen Master Dōgen (thirteenth century), in his younger days in China, suspected that the *Lengyanjing* (*Leng-yen Ching*), an important sūtra in Zen Buddhism, was not an authentic Indian sūtra, a point now generally accepted by scholars.[5] How one assesses the sūtras that originated in Central Asia and China in the light of continuing revelation is open to debate, however. After all, from the point of view of the Mainstream Buddhist non-Mahāyāna traditions *all* the Mahāyāna sūtras as such had to be rejected as inauthentic.

The origins and development of the Prajñāpāramitā literature

It is not possible at the present stage of our knowledge to make very many certain statements concerning either the origins or the development of the Prajñāpāramitā literature. In the past it was widely held that this literature, and possibly Mahāyāna Buddhism itself, originated in central or southern India. This is supported by a comment in the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā* that after the death of the Buddha sūtras associated with the six perfections will proceed to the south and thence to the east and north (Conze 1973a: 159).[6] Étienne Lamotte has argued, however, for the north-western and Central Asian (Khotanese) origins of the Prajñāpāramitā, and indeed Lamotte is inclined to see some Mediterranean and Greek influences at work in the changes occurring in Buddhism during the period of Mahāyāna emergence (Lamotte 1954: 377 ff.; 1958). Edward Conze has observed that Lamotte's arguments have shown only that the Perfection of Wisdom had a great success in the north-west during the Kuṣāṇa period (c. second century CE), not that it originated there (Conze 1960: 9 ff.).[7]

Issues of the origins of the Prajñāpāramitā and those of the Mahāyāna are closely connected, since at the present stage of our knowledge the earliest Mahāyāna sūtras are probably Prajñāpāramitā sūtras. The problem is complicated by the fact that archaeological and epigraphic evidence point one way, and at least some of the textual evidence points the other. A. L. Basham has asserted quite categorically that the inscriptional evidence points to a northern origin for Mahāyāna Buddhism. Observing that some scholars trace the origins of the Mahāyāna to the south, he distinguishes between Mahāyāna mythology and its philosophical ideas. These latter could possibly have a southern origin, but phenomena like the belief in heavenly Bodhisattvas are definitely northern (Basham 1981: 37). It may indeed be necessary to distinguish between the philosophical ideas of the Prajñāpāramitā, and the mythology of Bodhisattvas, Buddhas, and their activities, although both tend to be blended in much of the extant Prajñāpāramitā literature. It is possible, although purely hypothetical, to see in the emergence of the Mahāyāna as an identifiable entity the commingling of two originally separate strata, say 'philosophical' and 'religious' (these terms are purely shorthand). The extant Prajñāpāramitā literature, at least in its earliest form, shows a predominance of the philosophical, while

the other wing is represented by, e.g., the Sukhāvatī sūtras and the *Akṣobhyavyūha Sūtra*. It has been suggested that the *Pratyutpanna Sūtra* represents a deliberate attempt to unite these two originally separate traditions (Harrison 1978: 40). It would theoretically be possible thus to trace the origins of these two tendencies to different (although not necessarily intrinsically separate) religio-philosophical trends, and therefore perhaps to different geographical areas. Speculation, of course, but one interesting conclusion we could draw from such speculation is that since the name 'Mahāyāna' is attributed to an entity showing a commingling of both streams, so it may be a mistake to look for *the* geographical origins of the Mahāyāna. Rather we should look as far as possible to a number of centres of development, and trace in literature, archaeology, and epigraphy their contacts and mutual influences.

Edward Conze has distinguished four phases in the development of the Prajñāpāramitā literature, stretching over more than 1,000 years (Conze 1960: 9 ff.; 1968: 11 ff.). From about 100 BCE to 100 CE we have the elaboration of a basic text. During the following 200 years this basic text was very much expanded, while the subsequent 200 years up to about 500 CE was characterized by the restatement of basic ideas in short sūtras on the one hand, and versified summaries on the other. During the final period, from 600–1200 CE, tantric influences make themselves felt, and we find evidence of magical elements in the sūtras and their use. So, for examples of each category we have:

(i) The oldest text, the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā (8,000-verse) Perfection of Wisdom*, together with the *Ratnaguṇasaṃcayagāthā*, which Conze sees as its verse summary.
(ii) The *Śatasāhasrikā (100,000-verse)*, the *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā (25,000 verse)*, and the *Aṣṭādaśasāhasrikā (18,000 verse) Prajñāpāramitās*.
(iii) (a) The *Vajracchedikā*: this is the famous *Diamond Sūtra*, the 300-verse Perfection of Wisdom.[8]
    (b) The *Abhisamayālaṃkāra*, an exegetical work attributed to the great Bodhisattva Maitreya (see Chapter 10 below). This is sometimes said (by, e.g., Tibetans) to be the Perfection of Wisdom systematized for practice. Tibetans always study the Prajñāpāramitā through the medium of this text and its commentaries.
(iv) The *Adhyardhaśatikā (150-verse) Prajñāpāramitā*.

Edward Conze's four phases have been widely accepted by scholars, and their broad outline, particularly the expansion of a basic text and its subsequent contraction, had been independently suggested by Ryusho Hikata (1958) in Japan. One should be wary of accepting such schemata as definitely established, however. In the case of some of the shorter sūtras it is arguable that we have not so much summaries or abbreviations of older texts as completely new compositions retaining some of the themes of the longer sūtras (Nattier 2003a: 61, n. 17). Conze and Hikata disagree moreover on the antiquity of the *Vajracchedikā*, which Japanese scholars generally place much earlier than is usual in the West. Gregory Schopen has suggested that the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā* may actually contain a reworking of ideas found in the *Vajracchedikā* (Schopen 2005: 55, n. 17).[9] The issue must be left open, but at

the moment there is a reasonable possibility that the *Vajracchedikā* in some form or another dates from a very early phase of Prajñāpāramitā literary activity.

Edward Conze has elsewhere distinguished nine stages in the development of Prajñāpāramitā thought (Conze 1967b: 123–47): (i) The initial phase represented by the first two chapters of the *Ratnaguṇasaṃcayagāthā* (and also the parts of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā* corresponding to them); (ii) chapters 3–28 of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā*; (iii) incorporation of material from the Abhidharma; (iv) 'concessions to the Buddhism of Faith'; (v) the last third of the *Śatasāhasrikā*; (vi) the short sūtras; (vii) Yogācāra commentaries; and finally (viii) Tantric and (ix) Chan (Ch'an; Zen) uses and commentaries. As with his four phases in the development of the literature, with which this list overlaps, Conze's schema here is plausible but may have to be amended in the light of further research.[10]

Indeed, at our present state of knowledge any chronology of the Prajñāpāramitā and the development of its ideas can be taken as a provisional guide only. One should bear in mind the danger of circularity with schemes like that of Conze. In particular theories concerning the development of ideas are likely to depend to a greater or lesser extent on a prior understanding of what the literature is all about, and how it fits within the broader history of Buddhism in India. On the other hand understanding what the literature is all about would seem to require some grasp of how the literature and its ideas developed, and its context within Indian Buddhist history. The circularity may not be vicious, but it should suggest caution.

Wisdom (*prajñā*) and its perfection

Wisdom is, alas, all too rare; *prajñā* is not. This apparent paradox should make us sensitive to the usual translation of '*prajñā*' by 'wisdom'.[11] *Prajñā* is a mental event, a state of consciousness. Normally, at least in the Indo-Tibetan Buddhist context, it is a state of consciousness which results from analysis, investigation. 'Its function', the *Abhidharmasamuccaya* tells us, 'is to exclude doubt'. In this sense some Buddhist texts refer to a worldly or conventional (*saṃvṛti*) *prajñā*, the understanding through investigation of, say, grammar, medicine, or some other mundane skill.[12] These skills may or may not have religious significance, depending on how they are used. Texts also refer to ultimate (*paramārtha*) *prajñā*, the understanding which results from an investigation into the way things really are, what we might call 'metaphysical' understanding, the result of deep and sharp rigorous thought. In this sense there is the *prajñā* not only of Buddhists but also of rival non-Buddhist systems of thought – *prajñā* which apparently excludes doubt but is from a Buddhist point of view the result of a defective analysis. Thus it is possible to speak, as does the Sarvāstivāda-Vaibhāṣika tradition, of false *prajñā* (Jaini 1977). Since the principal concern of Buddhist writing is with the correct understanding of the way things really are, however, by an understandable process of thought '*prajñā*' comes to be used for the correct discernment of the true situation, the ultimate way of things. So, *prajñā* is given simply as the discernment of *dharmas*, those ultimates that mark the terminating point of much of

Abhidharma analysis, in the non-Mahāyāna *Abhidharmakośa Bhāṣya*. It will be recalled from Chapter 1, however, that in the early Mahāyāna, as well as in some schools with no particular Mahāyāna association as such, the teaching of *dharmas* as those final realities out of which we construct the world was rejected in favour of a teaching of the emptiness of *dharmas* (*dharmaśūnyatā*). *Dharmas* too lack any fundamental status and are not ultimate realities. *Dharmas* too can be analysed away. For these traditions the analysis commonly associated with the Abhidharma had ended too early, and thus such a *prajñā* was a defective *prajñā*, not the perfection of *prajñā*, or no real *prajñā* at all. Now *prajñā* is said to be a state of consciousness which understands emptiness (*śūnyatā*), the absence of 'self' or intrinsic nature even in *dharmas*. Since this *prajñā* is the principal concern of the Perfection of Wisdom texts, and since this *prajñā*, this wisdom, appears also to have been advocated in certain schools which were not in themselves anything to do with Mahāyāna, it is not surprising that there is a tradition in some circles of a Prajñāpāramitā in a Prakrit, that is, a non-Sanskrit, dialect belonging to the Pūrvaśaila sect and not specifically identified at all as Mahāyāna as such.[13]

Wisdom (*prajñā*) in the Indo-Tibetan tradition is primarily an understanding that results from analysis. There is, however, a distinction familiar to philosophers between knowing *that* something is the case – such as knowing that Archibald is the husband of Fiona – and knowing by acquaintance. Knowledge by acquaintance here would be having, for example, the dubious pleasure of actually meeting Archibald. In speaking of wisdom as understanding the way things really are there is correspondingly a distinction between knowing intellectually, through deep, even meditative, analysis, the way things must really be (knowing that 'Aha – this is the way things really are!'), and the 'paranormal' experience of a meditative absorption directed towards the results of such analysis – *dharmas* or emptiness as the case may be. We thus face another understandable shift in the meaning of *prajñā*. *Prajñā* is sometimes a meditative absorption the content of which is the ultimate truth, the way things really are. Thus the *Mahāyānasaṃgraha* can refer to the perfection of wisdom as 'nonconceptual awareness' (*nirvikalpakajñāna*). This is still *prajñā*, wisdom, for it is still a state of consciousness that results from analysis, although the analysis has been refined, as it were, out of existence, it has transcended itself, and the mind is left in one-pointed absorption on the results of analysis (see Chapter 3 below). Note, however, that this *prajñā* is nonconceptual and nondual, whereas the preceding examples have been conceptual. That there is a gulf between conceptual and nonconceptual appears to have led certain traditions, notably that of some Chan (Ch'an; Zen) practitioners in East Asia, to conclude that *prajñā* can in no way result from analysis, but rather is a natural response to *cutting* all analytic and conceptual thought.[14] There are nevertheless Indian bases and precedents for this (Williams 1980: esp. 25–6), although the particular emphasis on anti-intellectualism and cutting conceptual thought in some Chinese traditions may have also been the results of broader Chinese, perhaps Daoist, influence (cf. the *Daodejing*'s (*Tao-te Ching*) 'The *Dao* that can be spoken of is not the eternal *Dao*').

Thus far '*prajñā*' and its perfection refer to interconnected forms of conceptual and non-conceptual understanding. There is, however, one further slide in meaning to be noted. By a shift, perhaps understandable in the context of meditation, '*prajñā*' and '*prajñāpāramitā*' come through nonconceptual and therefore nondual awareness to equal the content or object of such an ultimate awareness, i.e. here emptiness itself. Thus the *Dazhidulun* refers to the perfection of wisdom as the indestructible and imperishable 'real mark of all the *dharmas*'. This is what is really the case, emptiness, the universal absence of any ultimate existence 'whether Buddhas occur or whether they do not occur'.

Ultimate *prajñā* as understood by the Mahāyāna, and *prajñāpāramitā*, the perfection of wisdom, appear to be generally the same. Mahāyāna and non-Mahāyāna sources alike refer to a number of perfections (*pāramitā*) mastered by the Bodhisattva as he or she follows the long path to perfect Buddhahood. The most well-known list in Mahāyāna sources contains six: giving (*dāna*), morality (or 'precepts'; *śīla*), endurance (*kṣānti*), exertion (*vīrya*), meditative concentration (*dhyāna*), and wisdom (*prajñā*).[15] The perfection of wisdom is primary; it is said to lead the other perfections as a man with eyes leads the blind (*Madhyamakāvatāra* 6: 2), although later writers in particular are sensitive to the suggestion that wisdom is sufficient unto itself and the other perfections are unnecessary. Candrakīrti, in his *Madhyamakāvatāra*, distinguishes between mundane or ordinary perfections, and supramundane perfections (1: 16). The difference is that the supramundane perfection of giving, for example, is giving with no conception of the fundamental real existence of giver, gift, or receiver, that is, it is giving in the light of perfect *prajñā*.

Generally, therefore, the perfection of wisdom is that wisdom which goes beyond the wisdom of the world and beyond also an imperfect wisdom associated by the Mahāyāna particularly with certain Abhidharma scholars who had put forward a plurality of *dharmas* as true ultimate realities composing the conceptualized everyday world. The perfection of wisdom transcends their wisdom, both in terms of its more refined analysis and also because it occurs within the context of the extensive and compassionate Bodhisattva deeds, the aspiration to full Buddhahood for the benefit of all sentient beings.

Absence of Self – the extensive perspective

Edward Conze has argued that the earliest Prajñāpāramitā is contained in the first two chapters of the *Ratnaguṇasaṃcayagāthā* and the corresponding chapters of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā*. The *Ratnaguṇasaṃcayagāthā* (*Ratna*) are verses in a nonstandard Sanskrit, and it is suggested that these verses were originally incorporated into the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā* (*Aṣṭa*) on the model of many other Mahāyāna sūtras. Whether Conze is right in maintaining that these sections represent the earliest Perfection of Wisdom awaits further research, but they certainly contain the principal features and doctrines of the Prajñāpāramitā in a very early and accessible form. The antiquity of the texts is shown, among other reasons, by their immediate need to establish their authority. Indeed, we are told that there are

even Bodhisattvas who reject the authenticity of the Perfection of Wisdom (e.g. Conze 1973a: 139 ff.). They are possessed by the Devil (Māra). In stating calumny against the Perfection of Wisdom they also calumniate the Buddhas. So they will be completely excommunicated by all the Buddhas, and spend a long and particularly horrible time in lots of hells. It is significant that in the *Aṣṭa* the principal speaker, apart from the Buddha, is Subhūti, the 'foremost of those who dwell in Peace', and not Śāriputra, traditionally the disciple most advanced in wisdom, and the patron of the Abhidharma.[16] The wisdom of the Prajñāpāramitā is a wisdom which calms all discursive thought and brings true peace. The sūtra is quick to point out, however, that all Subhūti teaches, and all that other teachers preach which is in conformity with the truth (i.e. *prajñā*), is in fact the work of the Buddha speaking through them. Indeed the sūtra ends with the assertion that '[o]ne should know that those beings are living in the presence of the Tathagata [the Buddha] who will hear this perfection of wisdom, take it up, study, spread, repeat and write it, and who will honour, revere, adore and worship it'.[17] As the *Ratna* puts it, '[t]heir teaching stems but from the might of the Buddhas, and not their own power' (Conze 1973a: 9).

The Perfection of Wisdom scriptures, as with most Mahāyāna sūtras, do not indulge in elaborate philosophical argument. For this we must look to the philosophical schools, particularly in this case the Mādhyamika. The scriptures make assertions which indicate the true way of things and behaviour in the light of that truth. Assertions of the Prajñāpāramitā are made from the perspective of perfect wisdom, that is, they occur from the position of a Buddha's perception wherein absolutely nothing has any independent final ultimate existence, but remains only in terms of conceptualized pragmatic conventions. All entities are like hallucinatory objects (*Ratna* 1: 14). By switching between these two levels, ultimate and conventional, it is possible to generate apparent paradoxes for pedagogic effect, but (*pace* Conze) it seems to me there are few if any genuine paradoxes, no real 'speaking in contradictions' in the Perfection of Wisdom literature.

The principal ontological message (message concerning what ultimately exists) of the Prajñāpāramitā is an extension of the Buddhist teaching of not-Self to equal no essential unchanging core, therefore no fundamentally real existence, as applied to all things without exception.[18] In context the suggestion is that there simply is no such thing as 'intrinsic nature' (*svabhāva*; see Chapter 1 above) for *dharmas*, any more than for anything else, to possess. All things without exception are just pragmatic conceptual constructs. From their own side, as it were, in terms of any genuine independent reality they might have, all things are like bubbly foam. They collapse under (ontological) pressure. This is not some form of monistic absolutism, a *via negativa* negating in order to uncover a True Ultimate Reality. The ultimate truth is that there simply is no such thing as a True Ultimate Reality, and the sooner we let go of such a thing the better:

> *Subhūti*: Even Nirvana, I say, is like a magical illusion, is like a dream. How much more so anything else!

> *Gods*: Even Nirvana, Holy Subhūti, you say is like an illusion, is like a dream?
>
> *Subhūti*: Even if perchance there could be anything more distinguished, of that too I would say that it is like an illusion, like a dream.
>
> (Conze 1973a: 99)

Who will there be who could possibly grasp such a teaching? The answer is that there is no one around who could grasp it. Nor indeed has anything really been taught at all.

One should be clear, however, about what is being said here. There is a widely-held view that the philosophical origins of the Mahāyāna lay in a move from the absence of Self in persons (*pudgalanairātmya*) found in the non-Mahāyāna traditions, to the absence of Self in *dharmas* as well (*dharmanairātmya* = *dharmaśūnyatā*), found in the Mahāyāna.[19] But this may be problematic both historically and in terms of the image of its own teaching found in the Perfection of Wisdom texts themselves. Historically, the teaching of absence of Self only in persons (in opposition to that of *dharmas*) is a feature of certain interpretations of the Abhidharma. The Perfection of Wisdom shows a clear opposition to any conception of really, fundamentally, existing *dharmas*, but this is not the same as an opposition to the non-Mahāyāna traditions as such, since at this time the non-Mahāyāna traditions and the Abhidharma schools that taught the fundamentally real existence of *dharmas* were not equivalent. As we have seen, there were traditions not specifically Mahāyāna which held to a doctrine of absence of Self in *dharmas*. The presence of teachings akin to those of emptiness in the *Sutta Nipāta* of the Pali Canon suggests (speculatively, but plausibly) that those who formulated the Prajñāpāramitā may have seen the teaching of mere absence of Self in persons alone, with *dharmas* possessing an 'intrinsic nature', as a dangerous innovation, leading perhaps to what they saw as a certain sort of ontological grasping driven by a frantic search for *dharmas*. Or perhaps (who knows?) they were concerned by a type of elitist conceitedness, suggesting a subtle type of grasping, that they detected among those who favoured some Abhidharma approaches. Either way, it was certainly possible for Candrakīrti to point to passages of a canon accepted by Mainstream Buddhists (extant in, e.g., the Pali Canon) which refer to each of the five psychophysical constituents (*skandhas*) as being like bubbles, mirages, illusions, and so on (*Madhyamakāvatāra Bhāṣya* 1: 8), a clear indication as far as at least some followers of Mahāyāna were concerned that the Buddha taught even non-Mahāyānists emptiness, the absence of fundamentally real existence, in *dharmas* as well as persons (cf. also *Aṣṭa*; Conze 1973a: 167).[20]

Second, the Perfection of Wisdom texts do not claim that complete emptiness is the doctrine for Mahāyānists in opposition to the non-Mahāyāna teachings concerning *dharmas*. Rather, the *Ratna* says:

> Those who wish to become the Sugata's [Buddha's] Disciples,
> Or Pratyekabuddhas, or likewise Kings of the Dharma –
> Without recourse to this Patience they cannot reach their respective goals.
> They move across, but their eyes are not on the other shore.[21]
>
> (Conze 1973a: 13)

The *Aṣṭa* explains that '[n]o one can attain any of the fruits of the holy life, or keep it . . . unless he patiently accepts the elusiveness of the dharma' (*ibid.*: 98). And again: 'Whether one wants to train on the level of Disciple [Śrāvaka], or Pratyekabuddha, or Bodhisattva, – one should listen to this perfection of wisdom, . . . and in this very perfection of wisdom should one be trained and exert oneself' (*ibid.*: 84). What the *Aṣṭa* is saying here is that there is no Arhatship or Pratyekabuddhahood without perfect wisdom, an understanding of emptiness, for it is necessary to understand the way things really are in order finally to cut all attachment and hence attain *any* of the supreme Buddhist goals. Attachment to *dharmas* is attachment nonetheless.[22] Thus the goal of the Hearers (Śrāvakas) is Arhatship, but this goal cannot be attained without understanding the absence of Self (= absence of intrinsic nature) in *dharmas*. In other words those who follow any Abhidharma teaching of the fundamental real existence of *dharmas* cannot attain even their (from a Mahāyāna point of view) limited goal. If we can follow the great Tibetan scholar Tsong kha pa (1357–1419), writing within the tradition of Candrakīrti, what characterizes the Mahāyāna is not the teaching of absence of Self in *dharmas* but the extensive deeds and compassion of the Bodhisattva who is treading the path to perfect Buddhahood for the benefit of all.[23]

So the terminology of the Perfection of Wisdom is that of the Abhidharma, but the critique is of the claim to have found some things which really, fundamentally, ultimately exist, i.e. *dharmas*. These early Prajñāpāramitā texts constantly ask what *dharma* is referred to by the term *X*; the reply is that no such *dharma* can be found, in reality there is no such thing:

> No wisdom can we get hold of, no highest perfection,
> No Bodhisattva, no thought of enlightenment either.
> When told of this, if not bewildered and in no way anxious,
> A Bodhisattva courses in the Well-Gone's [Sugata's] wisdom.
> (Conze 1973a: 9)

The Bodhisattva should not be bewildered. The *Aṣṭa* says:

> And yet, O Lord, if, when this is pointed out, a Bodhisattva's heart does not become cowed, nor stolid, does not despair nor despond, if he does not turn away or become dejected, does not tremble, is not frightened or terrified, it is just this Bodhisattva, this great being who should be instructed in perfect wisdom.
> (*ibid.*: 84)

It is perhaps difficult for us to appreciate just how extraordinary these teachings are as religious teachings, and how disturbing they must have seemed to anyone who took them seriously at the time they were first promulgated. The requirement of completely letting go, 'existential relaxation', cutting even subtle attachment, is surely an extremely difficult one to fulfil, requiring immense training and application, and (the sūtras hint) potentially, if taken seriously, very frightening. This, the *Ratna* tells us, is true renunciation:

> In form, in feeling, will, perception and awareness
> Nowhere in them they find a place to rest on.
> Without a home they wander, dharmas never hold them,
> Nor do they grasp at them – the Jina's Bodhi [Buddha's enlightenment] they are bound to gain.
>
> (*ibid.*: 9–10; cf. 13)

The language would not have been lost on contemporary readers (or reciters). The image of wandering without a home was a potent one, and might have been even more potent if this sūtra originated among or was associated with forest hermit monks. Other sūtras make the point more strongly, but the *Ratna* gains through its pointed yet poetic subtlety. True renunciation is the abandonment of all grasping attachment, and clearly this is a mental state which, depending on one's level of practice, may or may not be mirrored in the social institution of monasticism.

A final note: The Perfection of Wisdom texts repeatedly assert that the Bodhisattva does not engage in discursive thought. This may suggest a problem in relating the absence of discursive thought to *prajñā* as the result of analysis. It seems to me that the Prajñāpāramitā sūtras, in speaking from the point of view of the Buddha's nondual, non-conceptual awareness, give little attention to how the Bodhisattva is to raise his or her perception to that level. Wisdom, I have argued, involves initially *extending* the analysis, to realize as fully as possible, in the first instance intellectually, the truth of emptiness. To conclude that wisdom for the Perfection of Wisdom sources is the result of simply cutting discursive thought, making the mind a blank perhaps, would, I think, be a historical and religious error, perhaps the error referred to in Buddhist hermeneutics as 'confusing the result with the cause'.[24] Otherwise, as Tsong kha pa points out, spiritual, salvific value would follow from fainting or deep, dreamless sleep. *How* Buddhist traditions have held that one gets to the state of awareness presumed in the Prajñāpāramitā sūtras – or what practices were presupposed or hinted at by the sūtras themselves in order to bring it about – is, of course, another issue.

The Bodhisattva

According to Haribhadra (late eighth century), those following the Hearer and Pratyekabuddha paths may also be called 'Bodhisattvas' in that they are aiming for an enlightenment (*bodhi*). Thus when specifically Mahāyāna Bodhisattvas are meant, those aiming for full Buddhahood for the benefit of all, the word *mahāsattva*, meaning Great Being, is added. However, it is quite normal in Buddhist literature to use the word 'Bodhisattva' in a Mahāyāna sense to equal Haribhadra's *bodhisattva-mahāsattva*, i.e. that being who has taken the vow to be reborn, no matter how many times this may be necessary, in order to attain the highest possible goal, that of Complete and Perfect Buddhahood. This is for the benefit of all sentient beings. It is in this sense too that I shall use 'Bodhisattva'.[25]

The concern of the Bodhisattva is with liberation, full Buddhahood, not for himself alone (or herself, of course – this follows throughout), but for all sentient beings. The Prajñāpāramitā sūtras contrast this with the narrow scope of the non-Mahāyāna traditions, where their spiritual goal is in the last analysis purely a personal affair:

> They make up their minds that 'one single self we shall tame . . . one single self we shall lead to final Nirvana.' A Bodhisattva should certainly not in such a way train himself. On the contrary, he should train himself thus: 'My own self I will place in Suchness [the true way of things], and, so that all the world might be helped, I will place all beings into Suchness, and I will lead to Nirvana the whole immeasurable world of beings.'
>
> (*Aṣṭa*; Conze 1973a: 163)

Again, from the *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā (25,000 verse)*:

> What do you think, Sariputra, does it occur to any of the Disciples and Pratyekabuddhas to think that 'after we have known full enlightenment, we should lead all beings to Nirvana . . . ?'
>
> Sariputra: No indeed, Lord.
>
> The Lord: One should therefore know that the wisdom of the Disciples and Pratyekabuddhas bears no comparison to the wisdom of the Bodhisattva.
>
> (Conze 1968: 33)

The Bodhisattva generates infinite compassion, and we are told that one way or another all his acts are directed towards helping others:

> Great compassion . . . takes hold of him. He surveys countless beings with his heavenly eye, and what he sees fills him with great agitation. . . . And he attends to them with the thought that: 'I shall become a saviour to all those beings, I shall release them from all their sufferings!' But he does not make either this, or anything else, into a sign to which he becomes partial. This also is the great light of a Bodhisattva's wisdom, which allows him to know full enlightenment.
>
> (*Aṣṭa*; Conze 1973ab: 238–9)

This last point is crucial. The Bodhisattva's deeds and attitude are all sealed with the perfection of *prajñā* – the Bodhisattva does not, in carrying out his infinite great and compassionate deeds, consider that there is really any being who is helped. This is final, true, and total selflessness. In a famous passage the *Diamond Sūtra* says:

> As many beings as there are in the universe of beings . . . all these I must lead to Nirvana . . . And yet, although innumerable beings have thus been led to Nirvana, no being at all has been led to Nirvana. . . . If in a Bodhisattva the notion of a 'being' should take place, he could not be called a 'Bodhi-being'.
>
> (Conze 1958: 25)

And again, in another well-known set of verses, the *Ratna* says:

24. Wise Bodhisattvas, coursing thus, reflect on non-production,
And yet, while doing so, engender in themselves great compassion,
Which is, however, free from any notion of a being.
Thereby they practise wisdom, the highest perfection.

25. But when the notion of suffering and beings leads him to think:
'Suffering I shall remove, the weal of the world I shall work!'
Beings are then imagined, a self is imagined, –
The practice of wisdom, the highest perfection, is lacking.

26. He wisely knows that all that lives is unproduced as he himself is;
He knows that all that is no more exists than he or any other beings,
The unproduced and the produced are not distinguished,
That is the practice of wisdom, the highest perfection. . . .

28. When free from doubts the Bodhisattva carries on his practice,
As skilled in wisdom he is known to dwell.
All dharmas are not really there, their essential original nature is empty.
To comprehend that is the practice of wisdom, perfection supreme.
(Conze 1973a: 11–12)

The Perfection of Wisdom also speaks of the Bodhisattva's cultivation of spiritual and other practices in order to develop various psychic and mundane abilities which he can then use in various ways to help sentient beings both materially and spiritually. Through psychic ability the advanced Bodhisattva is said even to be able to manifest Buddhas as psychic creations for the benefit of beings, so that in this and other ways the clear distinction between a Buddha and an advanced Bodhisattva begins to break down.[26] Moreover, being selfless he turns over all his stock of merit, the result of his many virtuous deeds, for the benefit of others. He develops '[skill-in-] means' (or '[skilful] means' – *upāya*), including notably the ability to adapt himself and his teachings to the level of his hearers, without attachment to any particular doctrine or formula as being necessarily applicable in all cases.[27] The Bodhisattvas may, in their compassion, visit the hells in order to help hell-beings, and as the Mahāyāna developed so the notion of skill-in-means became a strategy whereby Buddhism could open itself out to new and perhaps originally non-Buddhist ideas. The (relatively late) *Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra*, for example, has Avalokiteśvara, a Bodhisattva so advanced that he has effectively taken on divine attributes (an example of Conze's 'celestial Bodhisattvas'), apparently sanctioning Hindu doctrines such as Śaivism for those to whom such doctrines would be helpful.[28]

Although it may have taken some centuries for the full flowering of the Mahāyāna doctrine of the Bodhisattva to occur, if we take Mahāyāna as a whole we find that the compassion and wisdom of the Bodhisattvas in the Mahāyāna scriptures are both descriptive and exhortatory. There are wonderful beings who have great abilities and perfect compassion. They have progressed well along the path to Supreme Buddhahood and are able and

willing to help sentient beings in whatever ways may be of greatest benefit. On the other hand the follower of the Mahāyāna is exhorted to take the Bodhisattva vow himself, to take these teachings and the stories of Bodhisattvas as models.[29] We know that historically the combination of descriptive and prescriptive planes sometimes gave rise to tension. The perfection of giving was often illustrated with popular but gory tales of the Bodhisattva giving his limbs or body, for example, or burning himself out of devotion and selflessness.[30] Chinese pilgrims to India in classical times describe curious cases of what amounts to religious suicide. Yijing, in the seventh century, observed with reference to jātaka-type stories of the doings of Bodhisattvas, particularly Śākyamuni in his previous lives, that '[t]he Mahāsattva offered his own eyes and body, but a bhikṣu [monk] need not do so' (Joshi 1967: 110).

The activities and aspiration of the Bodhisattva are well illustrated in the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā* by the story of Sadāprarudita ('Ever-weeping'), who willingly offers his own flesh in order to obtain money to give to the Bodhisattva Dharmodgata, who will teach him the Prajñāpāramitā.[31] The flesh is offered to a Brahmin who wishes to carry out a particularly perverse sacrifice but, as in all good heroic tales, the Brahmin turns out to be a god testing the novice Bodhisattva's resolve, and Sadāprarudita is restored to wholeness. The story forms an important source for our appreciation of the cult of the book, the Prajñāpāramitā text, and the Bodhisattva Dharmodgata is the perfect Dharma preacher (*dharmabhāṇaka*), a figure important to the early Mahāyāna. He is Sadāprarudita's Good Friend (*kalyāṇamitra*), the person who is needed, according to a voice from the sky, in order to acquire and master the Perfection of Wisdom. The story is allegorical and visionary.[32] Stephan Beyer comments:

> The metaphysics of the Prajñāpāramitā is in fact the metaphysics of the vision and the dream: a universe of glittering and quicksilver change is precisely one that can only be described as empty. The vision and the dream become the tools to dismantle the hard categories we impose upon reality, to reveal the eternal flowing possibility in which the Bodhisattva lives.
>
> (Beyer 1977: 340)[33]

It is frequently said in textbooks that the compassion of the Bodhisattva is so great that he postpones nirvāṇa, or turns back from nirvāṇa, in order to place all other sentient beings in nirvāṇa first. Such a teaching, however, appears *prima facie* to be incoherent, and contains a claim that somehow a Buddha must be deficient in compassion when compared with a Bodhisattva. Viewed logically, if all other beings must be placed in nirvāṇa before a particular Bodhisattva attains nirvāṇa himself there could obviously be only one Bodhisattva. Alternatively, we have the absurd spectacle of a series of Bodhisattvas each trying to hurry the others into nirvāṇa in order to preserve his or her vow. Moreover if sentient beings are infinite, a widely-held view in the Mahāyāna, then the Bodhisattva is setting himself an impossible task, and no Bodhisattva could ever attain Buddhahood. I asked the late Kensur Pema Gyaltsen, a former head abbot of Drepung Monastery and one of the most learned Tibetan

scholars, about this while he was on a visit to Britain. I explained that it was widely asserted in books available in the West that the Bodhisattva does not become enlightened until he has helped all other sentient beings to enlightenment. The eminent Lama seemed to find this most amusing since, as he put it, all those who had become Bodhisattvas would not become enlightened, while those who had not become Bodhisattvas would. He stated quite categorically that the final view is that this is not how Bodhisattvas behave. In Tibetan practice the merit from virtuous deeds is always directed towards obtaining full Buddhahood in order to be able to help beings most effectively. There is never any mention of really postponing or turning back from Buddhahood. Otherwise any Bodhisattva who did become a Buddha would be presumably either deficient in compassion or have broken his vow.

In fact it should be clear that the concept of nirvāṇa in a Mahāyāna context is a complex one. There are a number of different types of nirvāṇa – the nirvāṇa of the Arhat, of the Pratyekabuddha, the supreme and compassionate 'nonabiding' nirvāṇa of the Buddha, for example, not to mention the separate issue of whether a Buddha ever finally 'goes beyond' beings and enters some kind of final nirvāṇa (see Chapter 8 below). Generally, certainly once the Bodhisattva doctrine had reached its developed form, the Mahāyāna Bodhisattva does not postpone or turn back from nirvāṇa. Rather he or she *rejects* the nirvāṇas of the Arhat and Pratyekabuddhas, at least as final goals, and *aims* for the full nirvāṇa of the Buddha. According to Kensur Pema Gyaltsen, if a text states or implies that a Bodhisattva postpones nirvāṇa, it is not to be taken literally. It does not embody the final truth. It may be that it embodies a form of exhortatory writing – the Bodhisattva adopts a position of complete renunciation. In renouncing even Buddhahood the Bodhisattva precisely attains Buddhahood.[34]

In terms of the Prajñāpāramitā, Nancy Lethcoe claims to detect a difference between the *Aṣṭa* and the *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā* sūtras on this issue. The *Aṣṭa* clearly teaches that the Bodhisattva first attains Buddhahood, and only then can he fully help others. The *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā*, on the other hand, teaches that some Bodhisattvas will postpone their enlightenment until all beings have become enlightened (Lethcoe 1977: 264). She gives three references to the *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā*, but although in the first two sections there are many references to types of Bodhisattvas, some of whom it is stated will attain full enlightenment and help others, I fail to find any obvious reference to compassionate Bodhisattvas postponing Buddhahood. *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā* 170, however, is different. In Conze's translation (used by Lethcoe) it reads (1979: 124): 'Through this skill in means will I, for the sake of all beings, experience that pain of the hells . . . until these beings have won Nirvana. . . . Afterwards I will, for the sake of my own self, know full enlightenment . . .'. Clearly, the key word here is 'afterwards'. The Sanskrit and Tibetan, however, do not necessarily carry the temporal sense of the English 'afterwards'. They can mean 'thereupon', 'because of that', or 'thereby', all of which convey a very different meaning.[35]

I do not want to emphasize the linguistic point here, however. My purpose is simply to suggest sensitivity to the initial incoherence and textual uncertainty concerning the Bodhisattva's claimed postponement of nirvāṇa, an assertion which at one time appeared

to have become part of the lore of textbooks on Buddhism. In the first edition of this book I suggested that the textual situation regarding the 'postponement model' of nirvāṇa in Mahāyāna really requires further research. There certainly are passages that do appear to speak of the Bodhisattva seeming to postpone or turn back from some enlightenment. Since that first edition two extended treatments have come to my attention (Makransky 1997: esp. 336–45; Jenkins 1999: Chs 2 and 3, esp. 83–112), together with a lengthy internet discussion of the topic.[36] It is clear that once the idea of the *apratiṣṭhita* nirvāṇa (the so-called 'nonabiding' or 'unrestricted', or 'not-fixed' nirvāṇa) had become widely accepted in Mahāyāna, it made no sense to talk of a Bodhisattva wanting to postpone it. The *apratiṣṭhita* nirvāṇa can be used to refer particularly to the Buddha's nirvāṇa. It is the state possessed by a Buddha wherein he remains, according to developed Mahāyāna Buddhology, forever engaged with the world in order to help in the most effective way possible all sentient beings.[37] As such, this is a state that the Bodhisattva dearly wants, since it is the fulfilment of all his or her vows and aspirations. The Bodhisattva simply rejects the enlightenment of an Arhat, and aims for the *apratiṣṭhita* nirvāṇa of a Buddha as quickly as possible. But Makransky suggests that once we view the topic historically in this way we can surmise that it may have taken some time for the idea of a Buddha remaining in a state known as '*apratiṣṭhita* nirvāṇa' to develop. This 'not-fixed' nirvāṇa is a response to the earlier suggestion that a Buddha (like an Arhat) at his death does indeed (in accordance with the third Noble Truth) attain a final nirvāṇa, a cessation, and hence finally the Buddha too abandons the world of suffering sentient beings. In the light of that earlier view a Bodhisattva may indeed aspire to *postpone* that sort of nirvāṇa out of compassion. Since on this model Buddhas too, at death, eventually attain the same state as an Arhat possesses at death, the Bodhisattva will postpone nirvāṇa in two senses: (i) They do not want to become Arhats, and abandon sentient beings soon, perhaps even in this very lifetime; (ii) They presumably do indeed want to become Buddhas (that is, after all, what makes them Bodhisattvas). Buddhas are very helpful towards others. But, perhaps even more important, they very much want to spend the long time it takes to become a Buddha in helping others in all the ways Śākyamuni helped others while a Bodhisattva (as we know from, e.g., the Jātaka tales). Hence from compassion the Bodhisattva may even wish *not* to become a Buddha quickly, and certainly wishes to postpone to the indefinite future attaining the final cessation of the Buddha (which on this older model, remember, is eventually the same as that of the Arhat).[38]

This is clearly an unstable position, for reasons noted earlier.[39] It makes it look as if any Buddha is in some sense defective in compassion when compared with a Bodhisattva. It is difficult to explain why anyone would ever want to succeed in actually becoming a Buddha. Why not simply be reborn again and again throughout all eternity, helping others?[40] With the development of the *apratiṣṭhita* nirvāṇa in a strong sense which entails that the Buddha *always* remains helping sentient beings, and *never* abandons them, the issue of postponement ceases. But (Makransky points out) a clearly articulated notion of the Buddha's *apratiṣṭhita* nirvāṇa in that sense seems to have taken quite some time to develop. It is far from obvious that we have it, for example, in the early Perfection of Wisdom literature.[41]

One of the issues that seems particularly to have concerned the authors of relatively early Mahāyāna sūtras (like some of the Perfection of Wisdom sūtras) is not so much any final abandonment of sentient beings by a Buddha, but rather what the actual technology might be whereby a Bodhisattva can avoid falling into the state of an Arhat, and thereby prematurely abandoning sentient beings.[42] Given that the direction of Buddhist practices is towards enlightenment, how can a Bodhisattva avoid becoming an Arhat? How can he or she avoid 'attaining the reality-limit' (*bhūtakoṭi*)? Do Bodhisattvas, for example, need to retain an element of moral taint, of defilement, a smear of passion (*kleśa*) or perhaps some appropriate sort of karma that will keep them in transmigratory circulation?[43] Should they with the best of motives remain *saṃsāric*, imperfect, or maybe even in some way immoral?

One source that tries to respond to such difficulties is the *Aṣṭa* (Ch. 20; Conze 1973a: 222–9). The key to the difficulty lies in not setting up emptiness – the full cognition of which in its deepest possible liberating way would entail the 'opting-out' liberation of an Arhat – as a reified reality standing in opposition to the illusion-like empty things of saṃsāra. Thus, the Buddha states in the *Aṣṭa*, if emptiness itself is not set up as some sort of true reality in opposition to things (that is, if emptiness too is seen as in some way illusion-like) the Bodhisattva cannot 'attain the reality-limit', that is, achieve the nirvāṇa of an Arhat.[44] But how does the Bodhisattva avoid setting up emptiness as a reality and falling into the state of an Arhat? The answer is complicated and it is by no means fully clear what it entails in the actual practice of a Bodhisattva's meditation.[45] The Bodhisattva enters a set of three meditative absorptions well-known from mainstream Buddhism and referred to as the 'three doors to deliverance'. These are the absorptions on emptiness, on the signless, and on the wishless.[46] When developed fully and properly these can lead to the nirvāṇa of an Arhat. But in doing so the Bodhisattva is also inspired by pity for those who suffer, and also by another set of meditations familiar from mainstream Buddhism, the four *brahmavihāras* ('divine abidings') of immeasurable friendliness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity (or 'impartiality'). He combines the Perfection of Wisdom with his use of clever means and stratagems (*upāya*) to prevent himself from becoming an Arhat (*ibid.*: 224). He practises not to destroy but actually to keep (albeit under his own control) those factors that would lead to further rebirths.[47] Through such clever means and stratagems he fires and projects his spiritual career onwards to Buddhahood.

What this appears to amount to is that the Bodhisattva in cognizing emptiness also (as the *Aṣṭa* puts it) 'ties his thought to an objective support', that is, he remains with an awareness of suffering sentient beings as the objects of his compassion.[48] In possessing the Perfection of Wisdom he does not abandon others. In some manner the Bodhisattva is able to combine simultaneously his direct meditative awareness of emptiness with awareness of others, and of his project of helping them. Hence, we are told, he does not actually 'directly realize' or 'fall into' emptiness, but rather in an appropriate way for his salvific career he 'conquers' emptiness instead.[49] His clever means and stratagems are thus said to protect the Bodhisattva from realizing the reality-limit prematurely ('midway', before achieving all the factors for Buddhahood; Conze 1973a: 225). This is well illustrated, albeit with a slight

variant, in the *Upāyakauśalya Sūtra*. It is said there that both Bodhisattvas and Śrāvakas enter a deep (and, it is suggested, empty) meditation state.[50] But the Śrāvaka becomes quietistically paralysed by it, and is completely inactive, considering that he has reached nirvāṇa. The Bodhisattva, on the other hand, is driven by his wish to benefit sentient beings and is in such a meditation state because of that compassionate wish, as part of his path to Buddhahood. Hence he does not – indeed cannot – simply stay there immobile, doing nothing. He has much further to go, and a great deal more to do.[51]

3 *Mādhyamika*

Nāgārjuna and Āryadeva

Candrakīrti, at the beginning of his chapter on wisdom in the *Madhyamakāvatāra Bhāṣya*, observes that it is difficult for us to understand the intention of the sacred scriptures. So we are fortunate, Candrakīrti tells us, that there is a person predicted by the Buddha who can be taken as an authority for the exact meaning of the sūtras:

> How the Bodhisattva who courses in the perfection of wisdom sees the true nature of *dharmas* has been clearly taught by the Noble Nāgārjuna, who understood exactly the scriptures, in his Mādhyamika treatise, employing reasoning and scriptural testimony. This true nature of *dharmas* is characterized by their absence of intrinsic nature [*svabhāva*].[1]

The 'Noble' (*ārya*) Nāgārjuna, and Āryadeva who is said to have been his principal disciple, are credited with founding the *Mādhyamika* ('Middling' or 'Middle Way') as a school (a *vāda* or a *darśana*), an attempt systematically to set forth, demonstrate, and defend an understanding of the way things really are.[2] The name of Nāgārjuna is occasionally said to be the first great name in Buddhist thought since the Buddha, and for that reason (among others) he is sometimes referred to (at least among those like Tibetans who favour his Mahāyāna approach) as the 'second Buddha'. Unfortunately we know even less about the life of Nāgārjuna than we do about the Buddha himself.[3] He has been the focus of many hagiographical legends, however, and these do have some compensatory value for the scholar in the light they throw on concepts of sainthood and the activities of the spiritual hero.

According to Tibetan sources, for example, Nāgārjuna was placed in the monastic order as a child in order to escape an astrological prediction of an early death. His subsequent mastery of doctrine, medicine, and alchemy was such that he was invited by the *nāgas*, underwater serpents, to visit their kingdom. While there he discovered the Prajñāpāramitā sūtras, which had been lost to humankind since their exposition by the Buddha. He returned to the world with some of the sūtras, and through his magical ability was able to live for many centuries. Nāgārjuna also became the friend and advisor of a great

king, and used his magic in order to keep the king in full vigour and youthfulness. Alas, though, even with magic and compassion it is impossible to please all of the people all of the time. The crown prince, impatient to succeed to the throne, appealed to Nāgārjuna to commit charitable suicide. He wanted the Master to demonstrate perfect generosity by donating his head. The only weapon which could be used to behead Nāgārjuna was a blade of sacred grass, a result of the time when Nāgārjuna accidentally killed an ant while gathering grass for his meditation cushion. It is said that when the time is ripe Nāgārjuna's head and body will rejoin and again work for the benefit of sentient beings. This adds a rather nice millenarian touch to the story. After death Nāgārjuna was reborn in Sukhāvatī, the Pure Land commonly associated with Amitābha Buddha.[4]

I leave the reader to meditate on the significance of such a story.[5] Modern scholars sometimes incline towards the theory that there were at least two Nāgārjunas, distinguishing between a philosopher Nāgārjuna, who may well have been from the southern or Andhra region, and lived probably in the second to third centuries CE, and a later Nāgārjuna who was a tantric alchemist and yogin.[6] For that matter there may have been many Buddhists with the same name, that of Nāgārjuna. On the other hand it is possible that works have been attributed by the Buddhist tradition to Nāgārjuna simply because of his doctrinal importance. There was only one historical Nāgārjuna, and later texts written by others have been attributed to him. Either way, the single name 'Nāgārjuna' now would seem to refer to a composite being of myth rather than a historical figure. There are thus serious historical and methodological problems in trying to suggest in any simple sense what the 'teachings of Nāgārjuna' himself may have been.

Our interest at this point is with the *c.* second-century Nāgārjuna and not any later Tāntrika, if there was one with that name, who would have lived in a very different religious world.[7] Tibetan scholars divide the non-tantric works attributed to Nāgārjuna into three classes, and it is reasonable to start by taking these treatises as works of our second-century Mahāyāna philosopher:

(i) The analytic corpus.
   (a) *Madhyamakakārikā* – simply 'Verses on Madhyamaka', Nāgārjuna's principal philosophical work.[8]
   (b) *Yuktiṣaṣṭikā* – 'Sixty Verses on Reasoning [*yukti*]'.
   (c) *Śūnyatāsaptati* – 'Seventy Verses on Emptiness'.
   (d) *Vigrahavyāvartanī* – 'Countering Hostile Objections' – a reply to objections against his work.
   (e) *Vaidalyaprakaraṇa* – 'The Treatise that Grinds into Little Pieces' – an attack on the categories of the Hindu epistemologists (*Nyāya*).
   (f) *Vyavahārasiddhi* – a proof of the conventional realm. This work is lost save for a few verses, and some Tibetans substituted the *Ratnāvalī* ('The Jewel Garland').

(ii) The collection of hymns. A number of hymns have been attributed to Nāgārjuna, one group of four being termed the *Catuḥstava*, although there is some dispute as to which four should be included.
(iii) The collection of shorter treatises and epistles. This includes two works attributed to Nāgārjuna which he apparently wrote as letters to his friend the king, the *Suhṛllekha* ('Letter to a Friend') and the *Ratnāvalī* (if it is not included in the analytic corpus above).[9]

Various other treatises are attributed to Nāgārjuna by the Chinese and Tibetan traditions, some of which may be authentic, although I have mentioned already my doubt as regards the traditional Chinese attribution of the enormous *Dazhidulun* (*Ta-chih-tu Lun*; **Mahāprajñāpāramitā Śāstra*) to the Master.[10]

As with Nāgārjuna, some have wanted to distinguish between a tantric and a 'philosophical' Āryadeva. Traditionally it has sometimes been held that Nāgārjuna directed his attack at the Abhidharma scholars, while Āryadeva extended the critique to non-Buddhist philosophical schools.[11] His output was considerably smaller than that attributed to Nāgārjuna, and the most important work of the non-tantric Āryadeva was a treatise called the *Four Hundred Verses* (*Catuḥśatakakārikā*).[12]

The development of the Mādhyamika tradition in India

Tibetan writers, surveying the history of Indian Mādhyamika, have divided Mādhyamika teachers into a number of subschools and subsubschools. The Tibetan distinction between Svātantrika and Prāsaṅgika Mādhyamika, and the subsequent division of the former into Sautrāntika-Svātantrika Mādhyamika and Yogācāra-Svātantrika Mādhyamika became standard in Tibet and has been adopted by many modern writers on the Mādhyamika. I want to outline here how these distinctions have been drawn by one particularly influential Tibetan tradition, that of the *dGe lugs* (pronounced: Geluk – the 'Goodies'). But first a caveat. Apart perhaps from some relatively late developments there was little systematic attempt at such division in India itself and none, as far as we know, in China. Although writers in India who identified themselves as Mādhyamikas engaged in mutual criticism – most notably the criticisms by Candrakīrti of Bhāvaviveka – it does not follow from this that we can speak in any clear way of rival *subschools* of Mādhyamika, let alone that we can identify (as do Tibetans) a systematic range of doctrinal differences that can be tabulated as delimiting the identity of such subschools. Indeed it is quite possible that speaking of, e.g., both Candrakīrti and Śāntideva as members of an identifiable subschool of Prāsaṅgika Mādhyamika has led in Tibet to a search for common subschool features that has distorted the interpretation of one or both of these thinkers.[13] It is worth remembering too that the very terms *Svātantrika* and *Prāsaṅgika* used of Mādhyamika may well be backformations from the corresponding Tibetan expressions rather than descriptive Sanskrit terms in Indian usage for Mādhyamika subschools.[14] The search in Tibet for

characteristic school features has enabled Tibetan scholars to learn defining characteristics, debate school membership, and rank Buddhist schools, subschools and thinkers in a hierarchy. These all became facets of a remarkable Tibetan Buddhist *scholasticism* and its development in Tibet is an aspect of the flavour of Tibetan Buddhism reflected, for example, in the unique system of Tibetan monastic debate.[15] This was one response to the formidable task of organizing the vast Indian Buddhist literature and traditions as part of the transmission of Buddhism into an alien environment from an Indian homeland within which it grew organically over a long period of time.[16] But we should be very wary of projecting this Tibetan construction back in any simple way onto Buddhism in India, and always bear in mind that things were often seen very differently in, e.g., China.

If we can follow Tibetan sources it appears that the earliest of the 'sectarian' followers of Mādhyamika was Buddhapālita (*c*. 470–540), who is sometimes said to have founded the Prāsaṅgika ('Consequentialist') tradition.[17] He apparently wrote just one work, a commentary on Nāgārjuna's *Madhyamakakārikā*, which survives in a complete version only in Tibetan translation. It takes two to make a quarrel, however, and since in this work he shows no awareness of the criticisms by his arch-rival Bhāvaviveka (*c*. 500–70), who is said to have founded the Svātantrika ('Autonomous') tradition, it is only in retrospect that Buddhapālita can be called a Prāsaṅgika. In fact it was Candrakīrti (*c*. 600–50), who subjected Bhāvaviveka to trenchant criticism in defence of Buddhapālita, who is held in Tibet to be the actual founder of Prāsaṅgika Mādhyamika as a self-aware tradition standing in conscious opposition to the Svātantrikas. Most of Bhāvaviveka's works survive only in Tibetan and Chinese translation. They include his commentary to the *Madhyamakakārikā*, known as the *Prajñāpradīpa*, as well as what was probably the first 'encyclopedia of Indian philosophy', the *Madhyamakahṛdaya*, together with an autocommentary called the *Tarkajvālā* – the 'Blaze of Reasoning'.

The great Prāsaṅgika is Candrakīrti, who wrote commentaries to a number of Mādhyamika works. His *Prasannapadā* commentary to the *Madhyamakakārikā* is the only complete commentary on Nāgārjuna's principal philosophical work surviving in Sanskrit.[18] Candrakīrti's independent treatise, the *Madhyamakāvatāra*, together with its *Bhāṣya*, an autocommentary, remain in Tibetan and integrate Mādhyamika philosophy into the Mahāyāna spiritual path. The *Madhyamakāvatāra* and its commentary are the official 'schoolbooks' for the study of Mādhyamika in Tibetan monastic universities to the present day, and they thus occupy the same role in the Mādhyamika curriculum as does the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* for the study of the Perfection of Wisdom literature.

Among those also said by Tibetans to be Prāsaṅgikas one should mention Śāntideva (*c*. 695–743), whose *Bodhicaryāvatāra* is, like the *Madhyamakāvatāra*, a statement of the Bodhisattva's path to Buddhahood, but distinguished by a poetic sensitivity and fervour which makes it one of the gems of Buddhist and world spiritual literature.[19]

It is often said that the issue which split the Mādhyamika into Svātantrika and Prāsaṅgika branches was one of methodology, and this certainly does explain the origins of their names although, as so often in the study of Mahāyāna thought, relatively little work

has been done on these subschools and conclusions are still very provisional.[20] It is said that Bhāvaviveka objected to the use by Buddhapālita of *prasaṅga* ('consequence') arguments – that is, arguments which try to convince the opponent of the error of his ways by simply pointing out that the opponent's position entails undesired consequences for the opponent himself. According to Bhāvaviveka this simply will not do. It is necessary also to employ an autonomous, or independent, (*svatantra*) inference put into the proper logical structure (or 'syllogistic form') recognized by other schools of Indian philosophy, particularly the Buddhist logicians, headed by the brilliant Dignāga (fifth–sixth centuries CE). This dispute may look fairly minor, but perhaps it bulked large in an environment of scholastic precision.[21] It does have its soteriological dimension, however. According to the founder of the dGe lugs tradition, Tsong kha pa, the difference between the two subschools here is not simply one of method, but rather of the most effective way of bringing the opponent to an inferential understanding of emptiness which is, as we have seen, one type of wisdom (*prajñā*). For Candrakīrti, however, rushing to the defence of Buddhapālita, Bhāvaviveka was simply addicted to logic. Note also that for Tsong kha pa, while there is a distinction between Svātantrika and Prāsaṅgika on this issue of method it is not, in spite of their names, their characteristic distinction. The distinctive difference between the two subschools of Mādhyamika lies in the acceptance by the Svātantrika of *svabhāva* ('intrinsic nature'; see below) conventionally, although all Mādhyamikas deny its ultimate existence. For the Prāsaṅgika, following Candrakīrti, this is a contradiction in terms. Where there is a *svabhāva* there has to be the fullest sort of existence possible, ultimate existence. It hence makes no sense to talk of something having a *svabhāva* conventionally. Indeed, the *svabhāva*, since it entails intrinsic or inherent existence, is simply a fiction on any level. There is no such thing.[22]

The Tibetan tradition terms Bhāvaviveka's (subsub)school 'Sautrāntika-Svātantrika Mādhyamika' in order to distinguish it from the subsequent development of Yogācāra-Svātantrika Mādhyamika under Śāntarakṣita and his pupil Kamalaśīla (eighth century). The basic text for the Yogācāra-Svātantrika tradition is Śāntarakṣita's *Madhyamakālaṃkāra*, with an autocommentary, and a subcommentary by Kamalaśīla.[23] Śāntarakṣita was influenced by the development of Buddhist 'idealism' (see Chapter 4 below), the Yogācāra tradition, which he is able to use as a stage on the path to establish the Mādhyamika position.[24] The principal Yogācāra element in Śāntarakṣita's thought seems to lie in a view that, although ultimately absolutely everything lacks any fundamentally real existence (the sort of existence associated with a *svabhāva*), conventionally objects are not external to the reflexively aware perceiving mind. Bhāvaviveka accepted that conventional objects are genuinely external to consciousness, as aggregates of atoms, and so he is termed a 'Sautrāntika-Svātantrika Mādhyamika' because his position in this respect is like that of the non-Mahāyāna Sautrāntika tradition. Kamalaśīla also wrote a number of independent works, particularly the *Madhyamakāloka*, and three *Bhāvanākramas* showing the stages of Mādhyamika practice. Both Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla were important early missionaries to Tibet, and according to some sources Kamalaśīla is said to have been murdered there by anti-Buddhist rivals. Among later Yogācāra-Svātantrikas should also be mentioned Haribhadra (late

eighth century), whose *Abhisamayālaṃkārālokā* is the principal Indian commentary to the Perfection of Wisdom treatise, the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra*.

Emptiness and intrinsic existence – the incompatible rivals

The concept of intrinsic nature (*svabhāva*) was a development by (particularly Sarvāstivāda) Abhidharma scholars. In the Abhidharma context it seems to indicate, or to be related to, the unique defining characteristic of a *dharma*. It is that which makes a particular *dharma* uniquely what it is, as a case of resistance or hardness is the unique and defining characteristic of an earth *dharma*, for example. In, e.g., Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma, only *dharmas*, held to be ultimate existents, have intrinsic nature. Conventional existents – tables, chairs and persons – do not. This is because they are simply mental constructs out of *dharmas*. They therefore lack any specific and unique type of existence of their very own, unique to themselves alone. The existence of a table is, as it were, borrowed from the mental act that sees it as a table, and from the *dharmas* that are really present in the act of constructive imputation. But each case of the occurrence of a *dharma* must have its own specific and unique type of existence. Construction, and hence borrowed existence, cannot go on to infinity.

Since the Perfection of Wisdom sūtras taught that all entities, including *dharmas*, are only conceptual existents or constructs, it follows that for the Perfection of Wisdom there can be no intrinsic nature at all. The implication here is that construction, borrowed existence, does indeed go on to infinity. The concept of intrinsic nature (*svabhāva*), however, seems to undergo a subtle shift in meaning in the Mādhyamika. It eventually comes to signify 'intrinsic existence' (or 'inherent existence') in the sense of causally independent fundamentally real existence. For *X* to have *svabhāva* is for *X* to exist in its own right and therefore quite independently, that is, for it to exist inherently or intrinsically. In a famous discussion in Ch. 15 of his *Madhyamakakārikā*, Nāgārjuna tells us:

> The origination of a *svabhāva* from causes and conditions is illogical, since a *svabhāva* originated from causes and conditions would thereby become contingent.
>
> How could there be a contingent *svabhāva*, for a *svabhāva* is not contingent, nor is it dependent on another being. [Hence to have a *svabhāva* would necessarily involve intrinsic existence].
>
> (Nāgārjuna 1977: vv. 1–2)[25]

Tibetan writers of the tradition founded by Tsong kha pa (the dGe lugs school) give a useful series of equivalents for the expression *svabhāva* (intrinsic nature, i.e. intrinsic existence) as it is used by Prāsaṇgika Mādhyamika, among which is 'Self,' 'truly existing', 'truly established', 'ultimately existing', and 'existing from its own side' – that is, existing completely independently from the conceptualizing activity of the mind that apprehends the entity concerned (Hopkins 1983: 36).

When the Mādhyamika speaks of all *dharmas* as empty (*śūnya*) it means specifically that all *dharmas* (and therefore all things) are empty of any inherent or intrinsic existence.[26]

They are only relative to their causes and conditions, and nothing more. It seems, therefore, that it is only inherent or intrinsic existence which is opposed by the Mādhyamika. The intention is not to negate, e.g., tables and chairs as such, but tables and chairs conceived as intrinsically, inherently, existing and therefore, in the Buddhist context, as permanent and fully satisfying.

Later writers make a distinction between innate and acquired conceptions of intrinsic or inherent existence. Someone may follow a particular way of reading the Abhidharma or some other metaphysical tradition and acquire through learning an 'artificial' conception of the intrinsic, real, fundamental existence of something or another – atoms, *dharmas*, or the Self, for example. It is said that these conceptions can be refuted fairly easily by pointing out that *dharmas*, atoms, or the Self cannot have *inherent* or *intrinsic* existence since they are causally dependent, they are part of a causal and conceptual flow, 'It is dependent origination [*pratītyasamutpāda*] that we call emptiness [*śūnyatā*]', Nāgārjuna says (*Madhyamakakārikā* (MK) 24: 18; Nāgārjuna 1977; Williams 1977). We might gloss this by saying that it is because entities originate in dependence on causes and conditions that they lack intrinsic existence, they are empty.[27] In Tibet it is sometimes said that the particular meaning of the important Buddhist term 'dependent origination' (*pratītyasamutpāda*) for the Prāsaṅgika Mādhyamika is origination in dependence upon the designating mind. That is, when we say that all entities without exception are empty of intrinsic existence because they are dependently originated, one meaning of this particularly stressed by the Prāsaṅgika is that all entities are simply mental constructs – as the letter A, for example, which we consider to exist as part of the real 'furniture' of the world, is simply imputed by the mind when the three separate strokes that make it up are brought together in a particular way (this happy example comes from Hopkins 1984: 17). In exactly the same way this one table in front of me – also considered to be part of the real furniture of the world – is simply imputed by the mind when the various legs and top that make it up are brought together in a particular way. *All* entities without exception do not exist from their own side but are imputed by the mind in this way (including the table legs and table top, right through to the imputing mind and the emptiness themselves).

It is said to be more difficult, however, to refute the innate conception of inherent or intrinsic existence. The claim here is that unless we are in some sense enlightened beings we all, whatever we may think or say, perceive things as having intrinsic existence.[28] That is, we perceive and behave as though things were existent in their own right, we see them as more than simply practical mental constructions. We perceive and behave, therefore, as though things were causally independent, and thus in fact permanent. We thereby grasp after them with implicit expectation of permanent satisfaction, an expectation that is forever being frustrated. This is a version, of course, of the old and basic Buddhist claim that we suffer because we do not perceive things the way they really are; the root cause of the human predicament is a very deep form of ignorance. The refutation of the innate conception of intrinsic existence requires a correspondingly deep and sustained familiarity with meditation on emptiness.

Intrinsic existence is the equivalent for the Prāsaṅgika of really, ultimately existing, in the sense of existing from its own side, independent of the imputing, conceptualizing activity of the mind. In reading Mādhyamika arguments against other schools, on causation, for example, it is crucial to bear in mind from this perspective that what is being attacked is causation between intrinsically or inherently existent objects. To see entities as empty is to see them as mental constructs, not existing from their own side and therefore in that respect like illusions and hallucinatory objects.[29] Nāgārjuna says, concerning the casual flow within which *dharmas*, with their *svabhāvas*, are said to occur according to various Abhidharma scholars:

> Whatever comes about conditioned by something else is quiescent from the point of view of inherent [intrinsic] existence. Therefore both the process of origination and the act of production itself are quiescent. Like an illusion, a dream, or a castle in the air are production, duration and cessation declared to be.[30]

Emptiness itself is in a sense an abstraction. It is the absence of *svabhāva* and is seen through *prajñā*, analytic understanding in its various forms. Emptiness is not a vague absence, still less an Absolute Reality. It is a 'mere absence' (*abhāvamātra*), but the absence of a very specific thing. It is the absence of *svabhāva*, intrinsic existence itself, related to the object which is being critically examined in order to find out if it has intrinsic existence.[31] Emptiness is the ultimate truth (*paramārthasatya*) in this tradition in the sense that it is what is ultimately true about the object being analysed, whatever that object may be. Emptiness is hence a property (expressed in English by the '-ness' ending), a property possessed by everything. Everything has the property of being empty of intrinsic existence. It is hence not itself a *thing*, certainly not an intrinsically existing thing, in its own right. Emptiness, Nāgārjuna asserts, was taught by the Buddhas as an antidote to all *dṛṣṭis*, a word which must indicate here a viewpoint or dogma holding to the real existence of something as having intrinsic existence.[32] Those who take emptiness as a *dṛṣṭi* are declared to be incurable (MK 13: 8; Nāgārjuna 1977; Williams 1977). In common with others Mi bskyod rdo rje (pronounced: Mi kyer dor jay), the Tibetan hierarch of the Karma bKa' brgyud (pronounced: Ka gyer) tradition (the Eighth Karma pa, 1507–54), refers to two false interpretations of emptiness. One takes emptiness as equalling nihilism: nothing exists at all on any level; the other that emptiness is some sort of really existing Ultimate Reality or Absolute – perhaps like the Brahman of Hinduism. In common with what we saw in examining the Perfection of Wisdom literature, emptiness is not for these Mādhyamikas the Ultimate Truth in the sense that it is an ultimately existing or intrinsically existing entity. Rather it is the ultimate truth in the sense that it is what is ontologically true or ultimately the case about something, the object that is being analysed to find out if it fundamentally, really, i.e. independently, exists. What is ultimately true about that object is that it does not fundamentally, really, exist. If the object of analysis were to be emptiness itself then emptiness would also be found to lack intrinsic existence – just as the object (say, a *dharma*) is empty of intrinsic existence because, being the result of causes and conditions, it is thereby dependently originated,

so too must be its emptiness. Thus we come to the emptiness of emptiness (*śūnyatāśūnyatā*; see Hopkins 1983: 433). Understanding this is a potentially infinite series, depending on what it is that the opponent is grasping at, for the function of understanding emptiness is simply to cut grasping.

A brief note on Mādhyamika method

Mādhyamika texts critically analyse the claims made by other traditions that something exists with *svabhāva* and hence (it is argued) exists intrinsically or inherently. They themselves do not put forward any such independently real (i.e. *svabhāva*-type) existence of anything. The broad approach, therefore (at least in Prāsaṅgika Mādhyamika), is to take the claim made by an opponent that something really exists and show to the opponent, through reasoning using principles acceptable to the opponent, that this cannot be the case. Candrakīrti deals with this at length in his *Prasannapadā* commentary to *Madhyamakakārikā* 1:

> There is the setting-forward and proving of his own thesis only insofar as there is the drawing-out of the conclusion of the opponent's thesis. . . . This is the best possible refutation, in that the opponent is incapable of establishing his thesis.
>
> (Vaidya 1960: 6, on MK 1: 1)

This is the essence of the *prasaṅga* method. The Mādhyamika sets out to refute through reasoning his opponent, who advocates some sort of real existence and is thus bound and suffering through egoistic grasping. 'I do not myself have any thesis,' Nāgārjuna says, 'I negate nothing' (*Vigrahavyāvartanī* (Vig). vv. 29/63; Nāgārjuna 1978). Nāgārjuna's claim to have no thesis was extensively debated in Tibet even a millennium or more later.[33] There were those who interpreted Nāgārjuna's denial of a thesis as equivalent to an assertion that the Mādhyamika has no position at all and makes no assertions in any sense. He simply refutes. Others, most notably Tsong kha pa and his tradition, maintained that Nāgārjuna's denial of a thesis is only a denial of an intrinsically existing thesis, or a thesis involving intrinsic existence. For Tsong kha pa Nāgārjuna clearly has a position, and obviously makes assertions. One only has to look at Nāgārjuna's writings. Apart from anything else there are clearly grammatical assertions, and the follower of Mādhyamika also clearly holds the statement 'All dharmas lack intrinsic existence' to be a universally true one. Any alternative involves paradoxes. In the *Vigrahavyāvartanī* context, Nāgārjuna's text criticizes an opponent who argues that Nāgārjuna must accept the real existence of something, to wit, his own words and arguments – otherwise he could not refute anything. Nāgārjuna's reply is that his own arguments quite obviously also lack intrinsic existence, but this does not mean that they lack refutative force. It is like when one illusory or dream entity puts an end to another illusory, dream entity (Vig., v. 23). From which it seems to follow that when Nāgārjuna says he does not negate he means that he does not negate as an act involving in some way intrinsic existence. It is rather like activities

between illusory entities. There is a non-intrinsically existing negation, and therefore a non-intrinsically existing thesis too.[34]

It is a presupposition of the Mādhyamika analyses that if something did have fully real existence (i.e. if a thing existed with *svabhāva*) that thing would be resistant to analysis, or, as the Tibetans put it, the more it is searched for the clearer it would become. This is an Abhidharma principle for tracing an ultimate existent, a really existing thing.[35] In actual fact, when searched for, objects get lost. They cannot be found under analysis. Mādhyamika critiques often start by delimiting the direction of the search. Thus, for example, if *X* has fully real and hence intrinsic existence it would be found as either identical with its parts, taken separately or as a collection, or as an intrinsically existing entity apart from them. To use Hopkins' example, the letter A, if it really independently exists, is identical either with any one of the three strokes that make it up, or with their shapeless collection, or with a separate entity from them. Clearly it is not found in any of these ways, so it does not intrinsically exist, that is, it does not exist from its own side, independently of the conceptualizing activity of the mind that sees the letter A as the letter A, one thing rather than three (or more) things.[36] According to Tsong kha pa's interpretation of Prāsaṅgika, it nevertheless *does* exist as a conceptually created entity and it is perfectly correct for the Mādhyamika to make this assertion of existence. Some of Tsong kha pa's rivals, on the other hand, tended to see the function of Mādhyamika as purely therapeutic, the cutting of all attachment through refutation alone. The need to assert or to show that anything exists at all in any way was attacked as a move away from Nāgārjuna's purely critical approach and a step towards constructing a philosophical system. This, it was urged, was not what the Mādhyamika was all about.

Finally, when the Mādhyamika criticizes a thesis of the opponent he is not to be taken as finding – and hence trying to establish as really existing – something which is in some way the negation of what the opponent had put forward. The Mādhyamika simply refutes the thesis that something is the case. It was searched for under analysis, and it was not found. Depending on context he might then too continue by searching for the opposite (for some poor deluded person may become attached to this as well), and also fail to find it under analysis. As Candrakīrti puts it, it should not be inferred from the fact that an advocate of the absence of *svabhāva* draws unwelcome conclusions for the one who is attached to some intrinsic, inherent, existence that the first holds as established under analysis some contradictory position. The Mādhyamika has simply refuted; he is not committed to any rival position in that 'language game' – words are not like policemen with big sticks!

Three Mādhyamika critiques

Let us look now at some examples of Mādhyamika criticism. These examples are simplified summary accounts, intended as samplers, indicating Mādhyamika style rather than full and comprehensive expressions of the particular critiques.

On causation

The world of much Abhidharma analysis, as interpreted by Mādhyamika, is one of a series of fundamentally, really, existing *dharmas*, most of which are caused by preceding *dharmas* and in their turn can cause those which succeed. Nāgārjuna begins his *Madhyamakakārikā* with a critique of causation. The first verse provides a structure termed by later Mādhyamikas the 'Diamond Slivers' – the argument cuts like a diamond: 'Nowhere are there any entities which have originated from themselves, from another, from both, or from no cause at all.' The most succinct explanation of the argument is supplied by Buddhapālita. It is a classic series of *prasaṅgas*; indeed it was in commenting on this verse that Bhāvaviveka elaborated his attack on Buddhapālita's use of the *prasaṅga* and thereby inaugurated the so-called Svātantrika/Prāsaṅgika debate:

> 'From themselves' means from their essential [i.e. intrinsic] nature, and entities do not arise from their own essential natures because: (i) such an origination would be quite pointless, and (ii) it would lead to an infinite regress. If entities already essentially [intrinsically] exist there is no need to produce them, and if an already essentially existing entity is produced then it is not possible that it should ever be the case that it is not being produced. Thus origination does not occur from the entities themselves.

This last point requires a little explanation. In Buddhist thought generally something is a cause because it produces its effect – if the cause is present then it does indeed bring about its result. If *X* causes itself then, having caused itself, *X* would be present again. Since *X* is the cause as well as the effect so, being present again, it produces the effect – that is, itself – again. And so on, *ad infinitum*. Buddhapālita continues: 'Nor could it occur from another entity, because it would follow quite logically that everything could arise from everything else'. Entities are not produced by intrinsically existent, independently real, others. If *X* produced *Y*, and they are *intrinsically* distinct entities, then we have no actual explanation of causation, since *X* is equally intrinsically distinct from *Z*. If we call *Y* the effect of *X*, equally *Z* would be the effect of *X*, since in both cases the putative cause and effect are intrinsically quite distinct.

> Neither could there be origination from both self and other, since this argument would be prone to the faults of both positions. Nor from no cause at all, for then everything would be being produced continually and everywhere, and also it would become quite pointless to commence anything.
>
> (Williams trans.: see Nāgārjuna 1977)

Real production from no cause at all has two faults. First, since entities come into existence with no cause so the world would become random. Things would arise anywhere and everywhere. Second, since there would be no cause for the production of *Y* there could be no point in commencing something calculated to bring about *Y*. That would, of course, destroy all basis for Buddhist practice.

From all this we can conclude that when cause and effect are searched for they are not found. Causation does not resist analysis. Hence there can be no grand metaphysical narrative of how causation *really* works. This is not to deny, however, the everyday, unanalysed world (the world precisely of constructs for simply practical purposes) where, as we have seen, change, flux and dependent origination precisely *entail* that all things are empty of intrinsic existence.

On the Self

Nāgārjuna treats the subject of the Self in Ch. 18 of the *Madhyamakakārikā*. A more extensive analysis, an elaboration of Nāgārjuna's first verse, is given by Candrakīrti in his *Madhyamakāvatāra* (1970: 6: 150 ff.), and it is Candrakīrti's discussion which forms the *locus classicus* for the extensive Tibetan discussions of the subject. In Tibetan Buddhism analysis of the Self forms the first and crucial part of integrating the emptiness teaching into meditation practice. The following account is a simplified explanation based on Tibetan discussions. Nāgārjuna says:

> If the Self were the same as the psycho-physical constituents then it would be subject to birth and destruction. If it were other than the psycho-physical constituents then it would be devoid of the characteristics of these constituents.
>
> (MK 18: 1; Nāgārjuna 1977; Williams 1977)

The Self must be either the same as or different from the mind–body collection. But mind and body are constantly changing. If the Self were the body then it would be unconscious. If the mind, then which of the constantly-changing mental states is it? The present state has instantly ceased, and thus if the Self were the present state it would have already perished. If it were the present state at whatever time one says the word 'I' then there must be a whole series of Selves, and already the notion of one enduring Self has collapsed. If the Self were the whole series of mental states from birth to death then the Self would cease to be unitary and become a collection, a bundle, most of which has either perished or not yet come into existence. It could not then be an intrinsically existent Self. Likewise all the same problems would occur if the Self is the body plus the mind. Suppose, therefore, that the Self is posited as a really existing entity apart from the psycho-physical constituents. Then not only could such a Self never be apprehended, so that one would have no reason to think that it exists, but crucially there is no sense in which it would fit the description of what we believe to be our *Selves*. It would not be the 'I' that enjoys itself or feels depressed. It would seem to be a complete blank, and as such to be unnecessary and useless. And any Self which cannot be traced as either the same as, or different from, the changing mental and bodily states cannot really exist.

As with causation, it is arguable that the Mādhyamika is not saying that we do not exist, or that we should not use the word 'I'. Rather, we do not exist in the way we think we do, as intrinsically existent, independent, monads. The correct way of understanding our

existence is as conceptually created entities for practical purposes superimposed upon 'our' changing mental and bodily states.[37]

On nirvāṇa

In the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā* nirvāṇa is declared to be 'like an illusion, like a dream'. It is in the Mādhyamika that we find arguments to demonstrate such dramatic assertions.

Nirvāṇa, for Nāgārjuna, is 'the calming of all representations, the calming of all verbal differentiations, peace' (MK 25: 24; Nāgārjuna 1977; Williams 1977). 'The characteristic of reality [*tattva*]', Nāgārjuna says, 'is to be not dependent on another, calm, not differentiated by verbal differentiations, beyond discursive thought, without diversity' (MK 18: 9; *ibid*.). The expression 'not dependent on another' is glossed by commentators as meaning known by oneself directly, not through the indirect medium of another person. This reality is interpreted by Prāsaṅgika teachers as equalling emptiness, i.e. the real way of things, but as we have seen not an Ultimate, intrinsically existing, Reality. It is said to be the true nature of things (*dharmatā*), not produced and not destroyed – that is, things are always like this – and in this respect the true nature of things is said itself to be like nirvāṇa. This is just how things always really are. It is the cessation of the realm of verbal utterance and the (dualistic) mind (MK 18: 7; *ibid*.). It is the result of seeing things the way they really are, a seeing which occurs through going beyond the conceptualizing activity of our everyday minds and language, which conditions us to think in terms of *svabhāva* and hence intrinsic or inherent existence.[38]

It is only fair to indicate at this point, however, that there have been both ancient and modern interpreters of Nāgārjuna's thought who have seen him as indicating here as elsewhere a true, positive Ultimate Reality. I shall return to this issue when I discuss the Buddha-nature (Chapter 5 below). There certainly are texts attributed to Nāgārjuna which do without a doubt give such a 'positive' interpretation of the Mādhyamika 'reality' (*tattva*). Most important here is one of the hymns, the *Dharmadhātustava*. Tibetan writers (such as Dol po pa Shes rab rgyal mtshan, pronounced: Dolboba Sheyrap gyeltsen; thirteenth century), who wish to give a 'positive' interpretation of Nāgārjuna's thought, tend to refer for support to this work rather than to the strictly philosophical or logical texts.[39] I suspect very strongly that the *Dharmadhātustava* is not by the philosopher Nāgārjuna, and it does not seem to cohere with the *Madhyamakakārikā*. It is not possible at our present state of knowledge to show this conclusively, however. Nevertheless, so long as we restrict ourselves to Nāgārjuna's works on philosophy and follow the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā* it seems to me that a positive interpretation of Nāgārjuna's views on the way things really are is rather unlikely.

Since for Nāgārjuna nirvāṇa is the result of calming the categorizing conceptualizing mind, so any tendency to conceptualize nirvāṇa is refuted. Nirvāṇa, he says, is neither an existent nor a nonexistent, neither both together nor neither alternative. It could not be an existent, since all existents are part of the realm of causal conditioning (MK 25: 5–6; Nāgārjuna 1977;

Williams 1977). It would then be subject to decay and perishing (literally: birth and death; MK 25: 4). It could not be a nonexistent, however, since if there are really no existents so there can be no nonexistents. Nonexistence occurs when something goes out of existence, and also the very notion of nonexistence depends conceptually upon the notion of existence. Nonexistents are anyway not independently real entities (MK 25: 7–8; *ibid.*). If there is really, from an ultimate point of view, nothing (that is, nothing has any ultimately real existence since nothing has intrinsic existence, which is what ultimately real existence would be), then from an ultimate point of view nirvāṇa could not come about either. Moreover nirvāṇa could not be both an existent and a nonexistent together, since both together would be contradictory (MK 25: 14; *ibid.*).[40] And nirvāṇa as a really existing thing which is neither existent nor nonexistent is simply incomprehensible (MK 25: 16; *ibid.*).[41] In fact, Nāgārjuna says:

> There is nothing whatsoever differentiating saṃsāra [the round of rebirth] from nirvāṇa. There is nothing whatsoever differentiating nirvāṇa from saṃsāra.
>
> The limit of nirvāṇa is the limit of saṃsāra. Between the two there is not the slightest bit of difference.
>
> (MK 25: 19–20; *ibid.*)

What exactly Nāgārjuna meant by this apparent identification of nirvāṇa and saṃsāra is opaque in the extreme. But according to Tsong kha pa in his commentary to the *Madhyamakakārikā* (f. 263b) this is not to be taken as the expression of some mystical identity. Rather, nirvāṇa and saṃsāra are identical only in the sense that they have in all respects the same nature – absence of intrinsic existence. We should not think that this world is empty but nirvāṇa is some really existing alternative realm or world. Both are ontologically exactly the same. On the other hand for that very reason nirvāṇa is attainable here and now through the correct understanding of the empty nature of the here and now and then through letting it all go.

The two truths

In Ch. 24 of the *Madhyamakakārikā* an opponent accuses Nāgārjuna of having destroyed the Buddhist religion with his teaching on emptiness. Nāgārjuna's reply is:

> The doctrine of the Buddhas is taught with reference to two truths-conventional truth [*lokasaṃvṛtisatya*] and ultimate truth [*paramārthasatya*].[42]
>
> Those who do not understand the difference between these two truths do not understand the profound essence [*tattva*] of the doctrine of the Buddha.
>
> Without dependence on everyday practice [*vyavahāra*] the ultimate is not taught. Without resorting to the ultimate, nirvāṇa is not attained. If emptiness is coherent then all is coherent. If emptiness is not coherent then likewise all is not coherent.
>
> (MK 24: 8–10/14; Nāgārjuna 1977; Williams 1977)

Nāgārjuna seems to be making two points here. First, his opponent fails to understand an old Buddhist distinction between the two truths (*satya*). Thus he takes what is ultimately the case, i.e. things are not found, as being the way the everyday world is. This is patently absurd and would indeed destroy the Buddhist religion. As Candrakīrti points out, 'everyday practice does not exist from the point of view of ultimate truth'. In fact it is crucial for the Mādhyamika to accept the everyday conventional world, as it forms the basis for religious practice and without it enlightenment cannot be attained.[43] Nevertheless, the everyday conventional world must be accepted not as an ultimate world, a world of ultimately real things, but precisely as what it really is – an everyday conventional world. That is, it must be seen correctly as lacking intrinsic existence. The other point Nāgārjuna is making is that when the everyday conventional world is thus seen correctly it is apparent that emptiness (the ultimate truth) and the world are not opposed to each other but rather mutually imply each other. While emptiness in itself, directly cognized in a nondual meditative absorption, is beyond language, as Candrakīrti says, 'not conditioned by others, quiescent, accessible to saints only by direct intuition, beyond all verbal differentiations', still, it is nothing more than the mere absence of inherently or intrinsically real existence. As Atiśa (982–1054) puts it in his *Satyadvayāvatāra* (1981: 21): 'If one examines with reasoning the conventional as it appears, nothing is found. That nonfindingness is the ultimate. It is the true nature of things (*dharmatā*)'.[44] The problem for Nāgārjuna's opponent lies in his interpretation of 'emptiness' as equalling 'nonexistence'. As Candrakīrti points out, emptiness is taught in order to calm all verbal differentiations (*prapañca*), the net of concepts, and therefore it cannot equal another concept, that of nonexistence. Nonexistence is dependent upon existence, and is refuted by the Mādhyamika as much as the latter. In fact: 'The meaning of the expression "dependent origination" is the same as "emptiness", and not "non-existence". Falsely thinking that "emptiness" and "non-existence" are synonyms you criticize us' (Candrakīrti 1960 on MK 24: 7). Since emptiness and dependent origination mutually imply each other it is *because* things are empty of intrinsic existence that change occurs. It is the opponent, with his doctrine of intrinsic existence, who has destroyed Buddhism, since clearly with intrinsic existence there can be no change and no enlightenment. And Nāgārjuna makes a gentle joke: 'You, levelling at us your own faults, are like a person mounted on a horse who has forgotten the horse' (MK 24: 15; Nāgārjuna 1977; Williams 1977).[45]

The most important Prāsaṅgika source for the doctrine of two truths is Candrakīrti's *Madhyamakāvatāra* (1970: 6: 23 ff.), together with its commentaries.[46] All entities, Candrakīrti says, have two natures, because there is correct perception and delusory perception. The object of correct perception is reality (*tattva*, i.e. emptiness). That of delusory perception is said to be conventional truth (*ibid.*: v. 23). But both Candrakīrti and Tsong kha pa in his important subcommentary are quick to point out that of course this 'reality' seen by correct perception is not something fundamentally existing in its own right, with intrinsic existence. Delusory perception is also of two sorts: that which takes place when the sense organs are working effectively and that based on defective sense organs (*ibid.*:

v. 24). Perception of the latter type is said by the world, the man in the street, to be delusory in comparison with perception of the former type, which is accepted as correct by the world. This distinction is made by the world, from the world's own perspective using its own criteria. However, even the objects of correct worldly perception are only accepted as actually true by the world itself and not by enlightened beings (the *āryas*; on MK 6: 25). For enlightened beings the objects of correct worldly perception are 'merely conventional' (*saṃvṛtimātra*). That is, they exist merely from the worldly perspective operating according to its own conventions, for purposes appropriate to only that perspective. There are not really two actual *truths*. Really there is only one truth – what is actually true. Moreover, the objects of those who philosophize incorrectly, such as the Self or the theistic creator God, are incorrect from both the worldly conventional and the ultimate perspectives. These objects are simply complete fictions.

Let me clarify what Candrakīrti and others, like Atiśa and Tsong kha pa who follow him, are saying here.[47] If one searches through reasoning for what is really the case one finds that nothing resists analysis, and thus nothing is really (fundamentally, with the fullest possible reality) the case. This lack is itself the ultimate truth. Perception of reality, the real situation, the way things really are, has as its object emptiness, absence of *svabhāva*, that is, absence of any ultimate fundamentally real existence. Emptiness, however, while it is thus the ultimate truth (and is hence the only actual *truth*), is not itself an ultimate existent, for there are simply no ultimate existents. Some of the objects which are empty are maintained in the unenlightened world, on its own grounds, actually to be true, since unenlightened beings, through primeval ignorance, perceive things as having fundamental, independent, existence (and hence, the Mādhyamika argues, intrinsic existence). Others are held to be false by the world. Those beings who have reached a fair degree of enlightenment, however – while seeing that from a worldly perspective this distinction is made and may indeed be appropriate from a worldy perspective – do not see conventional entities as actually true. They are 'merely conventional' (*saṃvṛtimātra*). This (i.e. understanding things unenlightened beings think to be true as merely conventions) is the proper understanding of the conventional, and with that proper understanding of the conventional even enlightened beings may employ these conventional distinctions for practical purposes within the world (including the central purpose, for enlightened beings, of helping and teaching others). Enlightened beings are not thereby tricked into giving conventionalities any greater status than that of merely worldly conventionalities.

It follows, for Candrakīrti, that it is *not* the case that the conventional consists of, e.g., tables and chairs, dogs and persons *with svabhāvas*, that is, tables and chairs, dogs and persons existing as independent realities independently from the conceptualizing process of mental imputation. Things existing in that way are not correct *even conventionally*. There simply is no such thing, on any level, as a *svabhāva*.[48] Something existing with that sort of existence, i.e. something existing inherently or intrinsically, is a complete and utter fiction and is thus not even correct from a conventional point of view.[49] But unenlightened beings all see things that way, as having independent and hence *svabhāva*-type existence. Thus

the world as seen by unenlightened beings, from their normal worldly perspective, is for Candrakīrti not correct even conventionally. What is correct conventionally is the world seen as it actually is, as consisting of objects that are mere practical conventionalities. And the world is seen that way (in different degrees) by enlightened beings.[50] Hence explanations both in terms of the ultimate and in terms of the conventional are really for Candrakīrti to do with how things are understood and apprehended by those who see correctly, that is, to its fullest extent, how things are seen by Buddhas. Buddhas see all things as mere conventionalities, like bubbly foam or magical fictions that would collapse into nothingness under the slightest (critical) pressure. That is all things are, and all there is.[51]

Atiśa says: 'A *dharma* which has the ability to bring about its goal [i.e. has efficiency], which arises and ceases and satisfies so long as it is not critically examined – this is maintained to be the correct conventional' (1981: v. 3). Conventional and ultimate are thus not two distinct realities, two realms opposed to each other. It should be clear that the ultimate, emptiness, is what is ultimately the case concerning the object under investigation. It is what makes the object a conventional entity and not an ultimate one, as we think it is. Emptiness makes the conventional conventional. Conventional and ultimate are hence not separate. If they were, then seeing the emptiness, of, e.g., a chair or the person one is, would have nothing to do with the chair, or oneself, and would hence be pointless. Nevertheless, conventional and ultimate are also not the same. A chair and its emptiness of intrinsic existence are not literally the same thing. If they were then when we looked at a chair we would also see its emptiness. That is patently not the case. Nor is it a question of two different ways of seeing the same thing, as is sometimes stated in modern books on Mādhyamika. The fact that something lacks intrinsic existence is not just a way of looking at that thing. It is also something which happens to be (really, ultimately, and always) *true* of it as well.

Meditation and emptiness – an impressionistic outline

Perhaps the main systematic Indian sources for the integration of emptiness teachings into specifically Mādhyamika meditation practice are the three *Bhāvanākramas* of Kamalaśīla, which may indeed have been written originally for a Tibetan audience. In Tibet numerous such works were produced. The dGe lugs contributions have been studied in particular by Jeffrey Hopkins and I shall follow Hopkins' account.[52]

There is sometimes a tendency in the West to think of meditation and analysis as in some sense opposed. This is a tendency which should be firmly resisted when studying the Mādhyamika, at least as it has been interpreted in India and Tibet. Analysis, investigation of the way things really are, is an activity forming the principal ingredient of insight meditation (*vipaśyanā*), which leads to the different degrees of *prajñā*. The context of the earlier stages of meditation on emptiness may be either formal debate with an opponent or silent, private meditation, having calmed the mind and body. The content in either case will be systematic analysis: 'If an intrinsically existing entity arises then it can only come

from itself, other, both or neither. If from itself, then . . .'. Meditation on emptiness proceeds through a number of stages.

Initially the meditator gains a clear idea of what is, and what is not, being refuted. The object of refutation in Mādhyamika is real, i.e. intrinsic, existence. The meditator (presupposing, from now on, that he or she is engaged in solitary meditation) clarifies what intrinsic existence is, and how it differs from mere existence. He may review the faults in attempting to refute existence *as such*, the conventional realm as well, particularly if his problem is to over-negate. He subsequently checks that the reasons given for absence of intrinsic existence do indeed entail such an absence. For example, in meditating on the emptiness of intrinsic existence of the Self, he might consider that the Self lacks intrinsic existence because of being neither the same as nor different from the psycho-physical constituents (the *skandhas*, 'aggregates'). In order for the meditation to have any power, however, he must first be convinced that if the Self had intrinsic existence then it would indeed be either the same as or different from the psycho-physical constituents.

The meditator then surveys the arguments very carefully and systematically. And he concludes that therefore the subject of analysis lacks intrinsic existence. With experience the meditator is able then to place his mind on this absence alone, the vacuity which is a specific vacuity that is absence of intrinsic existence in the object being analysed. His mind in this state has no actual conscious conception of subject and object, although subject and object do still appear. He is said to have attained a conceptual realization of emptiness – conceptual because it is through the medium of a conceptualized image, it is still not a direct cognition of emptiness. Through repeated familiarization with such meditation the conviction that entities are empty of intrinsic existence becomes more and more firm and penetrates his awareness. It forms the necessary background to all his religious activity.

The next stage of meditation on emptiness is to attain perfect meditative absorption. Practices for generating stabilization, or calm-abiding (*śamatha*), are found throughout the religious world. The meditator gains an ability to place his mind without effort and without wavering on the meditation object, whatever object might be chosen for that purpose. Since meditation on emptiness requires analysis, and analysis is not conducive initially to a one-pointed mind, specific meditation on emptiness is normally postponed at this stage until an ability to generate calm-abiding has been acquired. It can take some time.

Once achieved, with the calm, still, powerful mind thus developed, our meditator now returns to the topic of emptiness, alternating calming meditation with analytic meditation. Eventually, it is said, one attains the ability to generate a deep state of focused absorption (but not yet pure calm-abiding) through analytic meditation itself. When analytic meditation actually generates the full state of calm-abiding itself the meditator is said to have attained insight (*vipaśyanā*). If this insight is generated with emptiness as the object, he or she enters what is called the 'Path of Preparation' (*prayogamārga*), which is the second of the five successive phases or 'paths' of Buddhist practice (see Chapter 9 below). Subsequently, in stages, the meditator removes the conceptual elements of this insight into emptiness. When a direct, nonconceptual insight into emptiness is attained in meditative absorption then

one is said to enter the third path, the 'Path of Insight' (*darśanamārga*). This is a direct, nondual cognition of the ultimate, emptiness.

If it is combined with the altruistic concern of the Bodhisattva then our meditator attains the first of the ten Bodhisattva stages (*bhūmi*). All artificial conceptions of intrinsic existence are completely eradicated. When he arises from his meditation he still sees things as being more than merely practical conceptual constructs, as existing from their own side, and therefore as having intrinsic existence, but the meditator knows that this is not how things actually are, and he is said to be like a magician viewing his own creations. There is still a very long way to go, however (a further nine Bodhisattva stages taking, it is said, two incalculable aeons), for he has now so to refine his perception that he eradicates completely even the innate moral and cognitive taints (including the innate conception of intrinsic existence). He must attain omniscience, Buddhahood, in which he no longer even sees intrinsic existence but sees emptiness in the very same perceptual act as he sees objects.[53]

A final note – Mādhyamika in China and East Asia

In East Asia the Mādhyamika was frequently known as the 'Three Treatise School', after the three Indic texts which serve as the root texts for this tradition in East Asian Buddhism. These treatises were translated into Chinese by the great translator Kumārajīva (344–413 CE), who may be said to have established the Mādhyamika tradition in China, although the principal orientation of the tradition was known for some time prior to Kumārajīva due to the early translations of the Prajñāpāramitā sūtras. There was nevertheless a strong tendency in these early translations prior to Kumārajīva to translate into forms and concepts familiar to the Chinese environment. The early translator Zhi Qian (Chih Ch'ien; third century CE), for example, apparently chose to translate *śūnya*, *śūnyatā* and *tathatā* (suchness/thusness; the ultimate way of things) by *benwu* (*pen-wu*; original nonexistence) a term used by the Taoist commentator Wang Bi (Wang Pi; 226–49 CE) to equal the primeval nonbeing from which things evolve, thus conveying to Chinese thinkers at this time a sense of emptiness as the name of the cosmological origin of manifold forms (Lai 1979a: 47–8; Hurvitz 1975).

The Three Treatises are all, unfortunately, of obscure origin. The *Zhonglun* (*Chung Lun*; **Madhyamaka Śāstra*) consists of Nāgārjuna's *Madhyamakakārikā* embedded in a commentary said to be by an Indic teacher whose name in Chinese is given as Qingmu (Ch'ing-mu). It is not possible to be certain of his Indian name or who this teacher was. The *Shiermenlun* (*Shih-erh-men Lun*; **Dvādaśamukha Śāstra*?) appears in the main to be a collection of verses drawn from Nāgārjuna with a commentary attributed by some to Nāgārjuna and by others to the elusive Qingmu. The *Bailun* (*Pai Lun*; **Śata Śāstra*) is said to be a work by Āryadeva, with a commentary by another obscure figure, a certain Vasu. The verses may bear some relationship to the second part of Āryadeva's *Catuḥśatakakārikā*. Sometimes the *Dazhidulun* (*Ta-chih-tu Lun*; **Mahāprajñāpāramitā Śāstra*) is added to the Three Treatises, producing a Four Treatise School. This text is attributed to Nāgārjuna,

in the form in which it now stands incorrectly, and it was also translated (or compiled) by Kumārajīva. Although some works by Bhāvaviveka were translated into Chinese, and, e.g., commentaries or partial commentaries on the *Madhyamakakārikā* by the Yogācāra masters Asaṅga and Sthiramati, neither Buddhapālita's commentary nor the works of Candrakīrti were translated into Chinese – not to mention the later so-called Yogācāra-Svātantrika works. This means that the Chinese Three Treatise School, and therefore the school in Japan and Korea, developed in general much earlier and quite independently of what are seen by Tibetan scholars as the major scholastic disputes and developments in Indian Mādhyamika.

The most important Mādhyamika among Kumārajīva's Chinese disciples was Sengzhao (Seng-chao; 384–414), but the greatest of the Sanlun (Three Treatise) masters in China was Jizang (Chi-tsang; 549–623). As we shall see, Jizang's Mādhyamika teachings seem to be rather different from those of his chronological successor Candrakīrti. One of Jizang's pupils, a Korean named Hyegwan (Ekwan; a number of important early 'Chinese' Mādhyamikas were in fact Korean) first introduced the Mādhyamika into Japan in 625, but although it contributed to the ideas of other schools it never really flourished as an independent school. In China, too, the Three Treatise School seems to have entered a decline after Jizang, and although it contributed a certain amount to Chan (Zen), for example, it eventually perished as a separate school in the ninth century. The Three Treatise teachings themselves, on the other hand, have continued to be studied to the present day in Chinese and East Asian Buddhism.

Two teachings in particular characterize Jizang's interpretation of Mādhyamika. First, there is his principle that 'the refutation of wrong views is itself the illumination of right views'. That is, the Mādhyamika holds no views at all, he simply refutes false views, and the refutation of false views is not in order to establish another view but rather to let go of all attachment to any view and thence to all words and conceptuality. That is (as it were) 'to see things as they really are'. Emptiness is not itself a true doctrine or view, but is a therapeutic device, as Nāgārjuna says, the antidote to all viewpoints (*dṛṣṭi*). The Qingmu commentary to the *Zhonglun* likens emptiness to a medicine – if the medicine increases the illness then one is incurable.[54]

Second, there is Jizang's doctrine of the two levels of truth. For Jizang the two levels of truth are not, as they are for Candrakīrti, two natures possessed by all things. Rather, they are levels of teaching which are, as such, not fixed but provisional, taking the student through a step-by-step dialectical ascent to a state of nonconceptuality. This ascent is composed of three phases. At the first level people have conceptions of existence, and these are opposed with emptiness (= nonexistence here?). At this level existence is conventional truth, emptiness ultimate truth. It is now important to negate emptiness as well, in order that the mind does not become fixed, attached to emptiness and thereby duality. At the second level, therefore, existence and emptiness are conventional truth, nonduality is the ultimate truth. By 'nonduality' here, Jizang explains, neither existence nor emptiness is meant. Third, both duality and nonduality are conventional truth, while neither-duality-nor-nonduality is the

ultimate truth (*Erdizhang* (*Erh-ti-chang*), trans. in Chan 1963: 360). This is the denial of all views, all extremes, and with the denial of all views and concepts the mind is able to shine forth in a nonconceptual state of *prajñā*.

In formulating his theory of the two levels of truth Jizang was undoubtedly influenced both by a close reading of Nāgārjuna and Āryadeva in the light particularly of the Perfection of Wisdom sūtras, and also by the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa Sūtra*, an important sūtra in Chinese Buddhism.[55] In this sūtra a similar but extended series of teachings is given in order to explain the meaning of nonduality. Eventually Manjuśrī, the Bodhisattva particularly associated with wisdom, explains that true nonduality is to say nothing. Vimalakīrti accordingly, when asked for his explanation of nonduality, remains in silence. On the ultimate level there is nothing to speak about. It is possible also that Jizang's teachings might have been influenced in part (and probably unconsciously) by certain Chinese Daoist concerns. Fung Yu-lan points out that Jizang's state where all concepts cease is exactly paralleled in the Daoist *Zhuangzi* (*Chuang-tzu*). Wing-tsit Chan too comments that Jizang's dialectic is strikingly similar to approaches found in the *Zhuangzi*.[56] An emphasis on an original, nonconceptual, spontaneous purity beyond all words (which mislead in a very radical way) has always been central to the concerns of certain strands of philosophical and contemplative Daoism.[57]

4 *Yogācāra*

Background

Nāgārjuna probably lived during the late second to the early third centuries CE, and he may well have been associated with a king of the Sātavāhana dynasty, a dynasty which held sway for some time over large areas of central India, the Deccan.[1] As we have seen, North India during the last century or so BCE and the first three centuries CE was subject to foreign invasions and political fragmentation. A vivid sense of impermanence ('lack of intrinsic existence') was present in the very fabric of the socio-political environment. With the rise of the Gupta empire in the fourth century, however, all changed. For two centuries the Gupta empire dominated India, and this domination marks the high point of classical Indian civilization. India's greatest poet and dramatist, Kālidāsa, probably lived at the court of Candra Gupta II (*c.* 376–415). It is from this time also that Chinese pilgrims, in search of sūtras to take home to China and translate, started to visit India and, with fine historical sense, they have left us accounts of their travels and observations. The greatest of these pilgrims were Faxian (Fa-hsien) and Xuanzang (Hsüan-tsang; the model for Tripiṭaka in the famous *Monkey* stories). Xuanzang visited India not during the Gupta period, however, but during the reign of Harṣa (seventh century), one of the major post-Gupta kings of North India, and it is possible to detect already, in comparison with the Gupta visit of Faxian, a certain decline in social and political stability.

Xuanzang has left a detailed description of the enormous Buddhist seminary of Nālandā, in present-day Bihar. Such monastic complexes were in some ways similar to the universities of medieval Europe, and provide the model for Tibetan monastic universities up to the present day.[2] The Indian monasteries taught not only Buddhism but, e.g., Hindu thought and other disciplines such as medicine. Monasteries like Nālandā and Vikramaśīla also trained missionaries in the skills needed in order to transmit Buddhism to Central Asia, China, and Tibet (Buddhism reached Korea and Vietnam via China, and Japan from China and Korea). More ominously for the history of Indian Buddhism, it is from the Gupta period that we can see the flowering of what has come to be called 'Hinduism' in its classical Purāṇic form, the form in which broadly speaking it is now familiar. It is admittedly difficult to show in detail the mutual influences of Hinduism and Buddhism at this time, although the influence

of Buddhist thought on Gauḍapāda (seventh century), the founder of Advaita Vedānta, is quite clear. It is arguable that the positive influence of classical Hinduism on Buddhism was more often in the direction of practices – the forms of Mahāyāna devotionalism, for example – than directly on philosophical thought.[3]

With the coming of the Guptas we find, therefore, socio-economic stability, prosperity, Buddhism a major academic (and land-holding) institution, a dynamic resurgent Brāhmanical Hinduism in its classical form, and an environment of intellectual brilliance and sophistication. Asaṅga and Vasubandhu, said to be the founders (together with a very obscure Maitreya) of the Yogācāra tradition[4], appear most likely to have lived during the early part of this Gupta period.

It would be wrong to suppose that the first stage of Mahāyāna was characterized by the production of new scriptures, and that this stage was followed by their systematic exposition through philosophic schools. The production of Mahāyāna sūtras seems to have continued throughout most, if not all, of the history of Mahāyāna in India – not to mention the apocryphal sūtras of Central Asia and China. Although they are characteristic of the earliest phase of Indian Mahāyāna, Perfection of Wisdom sūtras, for example, continued to be produced for many centuries alongside scriptures representing a conceptually later phase of Mahāyāna. One should be cautious also about assuming that within any one phase of Mahāyāna the earliest sūtras predate systematic treatises (*śāstras*). Indeed, the distinction in Mahāyāna between sūtras and *śāstras* is often very indistinct. The earliest sūtra clearly of the Yogācāra tradition, the *Saṃdhinirmocana Sūtra*, seems to postdate at least in part the earliest systematic treatise related to the tradition, the encyclopedic *Yogācārabhūmi*.

The *Saṃdhinirmocana Sūtra* is a fairly short and systematic scripture, although it still grew over a period of time. New teachings characteristic of the Yogācāra tradition are found mainly in Chs 5–7. As a sūtra the *Saṃdhinirmocana Sūtra* is quite aware that it represents a new tendency in Buddhism. It speaks of 'three turnings of the Wheel of Dharma'. This phrasing follows an old and recognized Buddhist precedent. The Buddha's very first sūtra was called the *Dharmacakrapravartana Sūtra* (Pali: *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*) – the 'Turning of the Wheel of Dharma'. In the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā* the gods rejoice at the teaching of the Buddha, proclaiming: 'We now, indeed, see the second turning of the wheel of dharma taking place' (Conze 1973a: 150). Of course, true to its message, the sūtra adds that in reality no turning actually occurs. The *Saṃdhinirmocana* shows an awareness of the thread of Buddhist intellectual history, a need to explain the 'turnings of the Wheel' and to resolve these into what it hopes is a final, definitive explanation. The sūtra explains that formerly the Buddha taught in Varanasi (Benares) the mainstream Buddhist Hearer (*Śrāvaka*) doctrines of the Four Noble Truths and so forth. This was a wonderful teaching, but it was not in itself the final teaching; it required interpreting and had to be understood correctly. It subsequently became a basis for disagreement. The Buddha also taught that all *dharmas* lack intrinsic existence. This was the second turning of the Wheel of Dharma, also marvellous, but it too was not in itself the final teaching and required

interpreting. It too subsequently became a basis for disagreement. The final teaching, however, the teaching of the *Saṃdhinirmocana Sūtra* itself, is completely definitive, absolutely marvellous and it cannot be surpassed. It is not a basis for disagreement and there is no higher teaching (see Lamotte 1935: 7: 30).

The distinction between texts that are definitive (*nītārtha*) contrasted with those requiring interpretation in some further sense (*neyārtha*) forms the basis of Buddhist hermeneutics and was an ancient one, found in all Buddhist schools. Tsong kha pa devoted a whole treatise to explaining how this distinction is made in the different Mahāyāna traditions (Thurman 1984). According to Tsong kha pa for the Mādhyamika, following a sūtra called the *Akṣayamatinirdeśa*, texts of definitive meaning are those which teach emptiness, where 'emptiness' is of course understood in the Mādhyamika sense. By way of contrast, the *Saṃdhinirmocana Sūtra* states that the Perfection of Wisdom and Mādhyamika teachings of emptiness were only a skilful means (or 'skill-in-means', cleverness in applying helpful stratagems) employed by the Buddha. They were not as such his final definitive teaching.

According to this scripture some of those who heard the Buddha's teaching of emptiness comprehended that as it stood it was not to be taken completely literally but had to be very carefully interpreted. They meditated and realized accordingly. Others were honest and good folk who did not understand such subtleties but nevertheless recognized the profundity of the emptiness scriptures and had simple faith in them. Since they did not understand the sūtras they could not meditate on them, of course, but still they did not go astray in their appreciation. Yet others, on the other hand, were wickedly mischievous. They took the teaching of universal emptiness without any subtlety and quite literally. Thus they over-negated, effectively destroying the Dharma in the process. Some then took this as indeed the Buddha's true teaching. Others, from the same basis, concluded that the emptiness teachings, the Prajñāpāramitā, could not possibly really be the word of the Buddha (7: 18–23).[5] Hence they committed the great mistake of rejecting authentic Dharma teachings. Both these have fallen into an abyss of wrong views. For the *Saṃdhinirmocana Sūtra*, therefore, the Buddha certainly did not intend complete emptiness in any literal and hence inevitably nihilistic sense. There has been in some circles an over-negation. Something, as we shall see, must really be undeniably there as a basis for false conceptualization.

The Yogācāra tradition – scholars and texts

All Tibetans know the hagiography of Asaṅga (310–90?). The saint strove for many years to have a vision of the great Bodhisattva Maitreya, at that time residing in the Tuṣita heaven awaiting his time to return to earth as the next Buddha. Despairing of the results of his meditation Asaṅga gave up but when, full of compassion, he stooped to help a suffering dog by the roadside, that dog became Maitreya himself. Maitreya had always been there, but he could only be seen through the eyes of compassion. Maitreya took Asaṅga to Tuṣita and there taught him five new texts:

(i) *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* – 'The Ornament for the Realizations', the treatise on Perfection of Wisdom practice mentioned in Chapter 2 above.
(ii) *Madhyāntavibhāga* – 'The Discrimination of Middle from Extremes'.
(iii) *Dharmadharmatāvibhāga* – 'The Discrimination of *dharmas* from their True Nature'.
(iv) *Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra* – 'The Ornament of the Mahāyāna Sūtras'.
(v) Finally, the *Ratnagotravibhāga*, often known as the *Uttaratantra*, a treatise on the *tathāgatagarbha* or Buddha-nature doctrines which will be examined in the following chapter.

It seems to me unlikely that the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* and the *Ratnagotravibhāga* stem from the same hand as the other three texts, but it is quite possible that these other three do have a single author. Modern scholars, doubting the divine, have disagreed over whether this charming story indicates that Asaṅga himself really composed these texts, or whether they can be traced to a genuine human author called Maitreya, perhaps Asaṅga's teacher, sometimes referred to as Maitreyanātha to distinguish him from any 'mythological' figure. Erich Frauwallner has argued that had Asaṅga considered himself inspired in a vision by the Bodhisattva Maitreya he would have written not philosophical treatises (*śāstras*) but rather Mahāyāna sūtras. Since these three texts are, according to Frauwallner, unitary philosophical works, and differ somewhat from works known to be by Asaṅga, so this indicates an authorship by a human teacher to be called Maitreyanātha rather than by the Bodhisattva Maitreya (Frauwallner 1956: 297). I leave the matter open.

Among works attributed to Asaṅga himself are the *Abhidharmasamuccaya*, a text which constructs a Mahāyāna Yogācāra Abhidharma and shows yet again that the Mahāyāna was by no means completely opposed to the Abhidharma. Attributed also to Asaṅga is the *Mahāyānasaṃgraha*, an important general treatise on Yogācāra doctrine, and the *Yogācārabhūmi* – the 'Stages of Yogācāra'. The *Yogācārabhūmi*, however, is attributed by the Chinese tradition to Maitreya, and is almost certainly the work of a school, a compilation over some time, lacking a number of characteristic Yogācāra doctrines and rather earlier than Asaṅga (cf. Schmithausen 1973a; 2005b English reprint: 244–5).

Vasubandhu is said to have been Asaṅga's brother or half-brother, the author of the *Abhidharmakośa* and its commentary (*Bhāṣya*), the principal source in Tibet (and extant in Sanskrit) for the study of the non-Mahāyāna Sarvāstivāda-Vaibhāṣika Abhidharma and its Sautrāntika critique. Asaṅga is held to have subsequently converted his brother to Mahāyāna.[6] Two important Yogācāra works attributed to Vasubandhu are the *Viṃśatikā* ('Twenty Verses') and the *Triṃśikā* ('Thirty Verses'). Among the other works said to be by Vasubandhu, the brother of Asaṅga, are commentaries on the *Madhyāntavibhāga* and *Dharmadharmatāvibhāga*, and a series of verses known as the *Trisvabhāvanirdeśa*, the 'Teaching on the Three Natures'. A commentary to the *Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra* may be by Asaṅga or by Vasubandhu (see Maitreyanātha 1970).[7]

The attention of scholars has relatively recently been drawn to an interesting fairly early Yogācāra work surviving in Sanskrit, the *Ālokamālā* ('Garland of Light') of Kambala, who

lived *c*. 450–525. Kambala's particular importance lies in the picture he gives of a form of Yogācāra just prior to the vigorous critical Mādhyamika response to it represented by the works of Bhāvaviveka, signalling according to Chr. Lindtner (1985: 113–14) a Mādhyamika revival after a time during which it had significantly declined as a serious (exclusive) Mahāyāna philosophical perspective in favour of Yogācāra. The *Ālokamālā* also tries to harmonize where possible the Mādhyamika position with that of Yogācāra, and hence invites comparison with a later attempt to do the same thing – this time from a Mādhyamika perspective – in the work of Śāntarakṣita.[8]

Two other important Indian writers on Yogācāra should also be mentioned – Sthiramati and Dharmapāla. Both these masters appear to have lived during the sixth century, and were roughly contemporaneous with the Mādhyamika Bhāvaviveka, with whom they engaged in written debate. Sthiramati and Dharmapāla represent different subschools of Yogācāra. Sthiramati's tradition was associated with the monastery of Valabhī, founded in the sixth century by Sthiramati's teacher Guṇamati, who had left Nālandā. Dharmapāla, who died at the early age of 32, represented the Nālandā tradition, although it is unclear how far he also innovated. Xuanzang studied Yogācāra at Nālandā and upon his return to China either he or his students established the Faxiang (Fa-hsiang) school purporting to follow the interpretation of Dharmapāla. The basic text of this school in China was the *Chengweishilun* (*Ch'eng-wei-shih Lun*; **Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi*), a translation of Vasubandhu's *Triṃśikā* together with a commentary composed of ten Indian commentaries, with precedence given to that by Dharmapāla. Among the most important Yogācāra works of Sthiramati were his commentaries on the *Triṃśikā* and the *Madhyāntavibhāga*, both of which survive in Sanskrit. The *Chengweishilun* itself is our main source for Dharmapāla's views, although some other works do survive in Chinese translation.

Finally, one should note in passing the important Buddhist logico-epistemological tradition associated with the names of Dignāga (late fifth or sixth centuries) and Dharmakīrti (*c*. seventh century). Here we find strong Yogācāra elements particularly relating to their final position on the ontology and nature of consciousness, but also Sautrāntika aspects in their emphasis on the radical, extreme, momentary nature of things and the impact that has on their detailed and sophisticated treatment of the processes of perception and conceptual construction. The principal work of Dignāga is his *Pramāṇasamuccaya* (roughly 'Compendium of the Means of Knowing'), while among Dharmakīrti's major works is his *Pramāṇavārttika* ('Commentary on [Dignāga's] *Pramāṇa[samuccaya]*').[9]

The three natures (*trisvabhāva*)

I want to concentrate here on areas of Yogācāra thought where their interests particularly coincide with those of Mādhyamika, although with (it seems to me) often very different conclusions. We should not neglect to mention in passing, however, the enormous contribution made by Yogācāra writers to systematizing, e.g., the stages of the path of the Bodhisattva, or the nature of Buddhahood (the 'Bodies of the Buddha'). Relative to

Yogācāra sources, reflecting perhaps the much more elaborate doctrinal world in which Yogācāra developed, Mādhyamika contributions to discussions of the spiritual path, Mahāyāna ethics, and the nature of the goal tend to be comparatively undeveloped and among later Mādhyamikas rather derivative. This point is well-known among Tibetans, who see the main contribution of Yogācāra to Mahāyāna to be in the area of its elaborate discussions of the path and its results.

Possibly the oldest name for this school is *Yogācāra*, which perhaps in this context referred in origin in some way to monks dedicated particularly to the practice of *yoga*, here meaning meditation.[10] The expression *Cittamātra*, together with *Vijñaptimātra* and sometimes *Vijñānavāda* which are also used for the tradition, all refer to its principal classical doctrine, which is that of Mind (*citta*) or Consciousness (*vijñāna*) Only (*mātra*).[11] It is plausible that some of the key doctrines of classical Yogācāra, were the product initially of reflection on meditative experience. This is suggested already at a very early, pre-Yogācāra stage in the *Pratyutpanna Sūtra*.[12] In Ch. 3 of that sūtra questions are asked about the status of Buddhas seen and teachings received in meditation.[13] How is it possible? The answer is that '[w]hatever belongs to this triple world is nothing but thought [*cittamātra*]. Why is that? It is because however I imagine things, that is how they appear' (trans. Harrison 1990: 42). The Buddha is produced by mind, or thought, as is my own body – although true to the Mādhyamika orientation of this sūtra the mind is also stated to be lacking in intrinsic existence. When we turn to the earliest specifically and characteristically Yogācāra scripture, the *Saṃdhinirmocana Sūtra*, we again find that the doctrine that all is only mind is introduced in the context of a discussion of meditation. The Buddha is asked whether the images perceived in meditation are different or not different from the mind? The answer is that they are not different. The image is said to be only perception.[14] Nevertheless, people consider that there are also material objects in the world, really existing outside the mind. Are these not different from the mind? The Buddha replies that they are indeed not different but deluded, unenlightened people do not understand the teaching of 'only perception' (Lamotte 1935: 8: 7–8). Hence Lambert Schmithausen has suggested that the 'formulation of universal idealism' in Yogācāra arose out of a generalization of reflections on meditative practice, and not originally from purely theoretical or doctrinal, philosophical concerns (Schmithausen 1973a: 176; 2005b English reprint: 246).[15] Moreover, the fact that all is experienced in meditation to be only mind enables the yogin to engage in the world and manipulate it in what appears to be a wholly miraculous way.[16]

Yogācāra is a complex and sophisticated tradition, and although a favourite of Japanese and Chinese scholars, until recently it has been much less studied in the West than Mādhyamika. It certainly should not be presupposed that all or even most of the Yogācāra masters and texts teach exactly the same doctrine. Nevertheless, they do have some teachings broadly in common, and central to Yogācāra thought is that of the 'Three Natures'.[17] The teaching of the Three Natures is for the *Saṃdhinirmocana Sūtra* the final correct doctrine, requiring no interpretation or adaptation, the antidote to a nihilistic interpretation of emptiness.

All things which can be known can be subsumed under these Three Natures. The first Nature is called the constructed or conceptualized nature (*parikalpitasvabhāva*). The *Saṃdhinirmocana Sūtra* connects it with the falsifying activity of language. It is the realm of words which attribute intrinsic existence to things (Lamotte 1935: 6: 4). More informatively, the *Mahāyānasaṃgraha* and its commentaries explain that the conceptualized or constructed nature is appearance as an object when really there are only perceptions (*vijñaptimātra*). By 'object' here is meant both poles of an experience, both experience and that which is experienced, referred to in Yogācāra terminology as 'grasper' and 'grasped' (*grāhaka /grāhya*; *Mahāyānasaṃgraha* 2: 3; Asaṅga 1938). The conceptualized nature is the world as it is experienced by everyday unenlightened folk, the world of (assumed) really existing subjects confronting really existing and separate objects. It is how things appear to us, the realm of subject–object duality. These things do not actually exist at all (*Triṃśikā* v. 20; Vasubandhu 1984). Things are not really like that.

The second Nature, the dependent nature (*paratantrasvabhāva*), is, according to the *Saṃdhinirmocana Sūtra*, the dependent origination of *dharmas*, that is, the causal flow (Lamotte 1935: 6: 5).[18] According to the *Trisvabhāvanirdeśa* it is that *which* appears, in opposition to the *way* in which it appears, which is the first Nature, the conceptualized nature (v. 2; Vasubandhu 1932–3). In other words, it is the basis for the erroneous partition into supposedly intrinsically existing subjects and objects which marks the conceptualized nature.

In order to understand what is being said here, one should try to imagine all things, objects of experience and oneself, the one who is experiencing, as just a flow of perceptions or experiences. We do not know that there is something 'out there'. We have only experiences of colours, shapes, tactile data and so on. We also do not know that we ourselves are anything other than a further series of experiences. Taken together, there is only an ever-changing flow of perceptions – *vijñaptimātra*. Due to our beginningless ignorance we construct these perceptions into enduring subjects and objects confronting each other. This is irrational, things are not really like that, and it leads to suffering and frustration. We should come to see things the way they really are, and let all that go. The constructed objects are the conceptualized nature. The flow of perceptions or experiences which forms the basis for our mistaken constructions is the dependent nature.

In itself the dependent nature is, of course, beyond language, since language is the realm of the conceptualized nature. Language necessarily falsifies. It constructs supposedly intrinsically existing entities. But doing our best to offer an indication of what it is, we might say that the dependent nature is the flow of experiences which is erroneously partitioned. The *Mahāyānasaṃgraha* describes it as the support for the manifestation of non-existent and fictive things (2: 2; Asaṅga 1938). Note, however, that for the Yogācāra falsification (*pace* the Mādhyamika) requires a really existing basis. As Kambala puts it (Lindtner 1985: 128):

> Here, there does not exist the slightest thing that is external or internal. That is because [in good Mādhyamika fashion] they are mutually established. Nor is there anything

> in between. But it is not that there is [complete] nonexistence either. This is because [things] are settled in mind-only (*cittamātra*).

This point is strongly made in the very earliest phase of Yogācāra thought, in the *Yogācārabhūmi*. One has to avoid both under- and over-negation. Under-negation is to take for intrinsically existing realities entities which are merely the creation of language, in other words, the conceptualized nature. Over-negation is to deny the basis which really, ultimately (*paramārtha*) exists, albeit inexpressibly, and to say that nothing exists at all. Both these faults are ruinous to religious practice. There must be a real basis, for without a real basis erroneous construction, the conceptualized nature, could never take place.[19] Moreover, if the dependent nature as basis did not exist, then likewise liberation, seeing things the way they really are, also could not occur. There would be simply universal nonexistence (*Mahāyānasaṃgraha* 2: 25; Asaṅga 1938).

The final Nature is called the perfected nature (or 'consummated nature'; *pariniṣpannasvabhāva*). According to the *Saṃdhinirmocana Sūtra* it is the 'Suchness' or 'Thusness' (*tathatā*), the true nature of things, which is discovered in meditation (Lamotte 1935: 6: 6). It is said to be the *complete absence*, in the dependent nature, of objects – that is, the objects of the conceptualized nature (*Mahāyānasaṃgraha* 2: 4; Asaṅga 1938). This is not as difficult as it sounds. What it amounts to is that through meditation we come to know that our flow of perceptions, of experiences, really lacks the fixed enduring subjects and objects which we have constructed out of it. There is only the flow of experiences. The perfected nature is, therefore, at least in this context expressed as *the fact* of nonduality. In itself it is the very negative – the negation, the absence – that is 'not-two' here. There is neither subject nor object but only a single flow. It is also emptiness, explained for this tradition as meaning that one thing is empty of another. That is, the flow of perceptions – the dependent nature – is empty of enduring entities (i.e. the conceptualized nature). What remains, the basis which is empty of those enduring entities, the flow of perceptions themselves (in enlightenment seen as they truly are) nevertheless really does exist (Willis 1979: 163; Thurman 1984: 214). As Kambala puts it (Lindtner 1985: 166), 'It is by virtue of the dependent nature that emptiness can be seen correctly.' The perfected nature (*pariniṣpannasvabhāva*) here is hence the *actual absence*, the absence that occurs when one thing that does exist is lacking something that does not exist there. Thus the Yogācāra tradition is able to harmonize its position with the Perfection of Wisdom literature. What has to be known for enlightenment is indeed emptiness, a literal absence. But now it is not explained as absence of intrinsic existence. Rather, it is the absence that is the perfected nature – that is, the complete absence, in the dependent nature, of the conceptualized nature. It is the highest of the Three Natures, since while the first Nature is false, and the second Nature just is, the perfected nature is *what has to be known* for enlightenment. It is soteriologically the highest. It is also spoken of as the *cessation* (of false constructions) that occurs when the truth, the absence in the dependent nature of the objects of the conceptualized nature, is realized. Hence sometimes, derivatively and perhaps not very precisely,

the pure state of mind that results from this cessation (that results from knowing the absence in the dependent nature of the objects of the conceptualized nature) can also be referred to as the perfected nature.

One of the commentaries to the *Mahāyānasaṃgraha* (Asaṅga 1938) explains all the Three Natures with reference to the example of water seen in a mirage. The water as perception rather than real water is the dependent nature. The water considered by a person hallucinating to be real water is the conceptualized nature, while the complete absence of real water in the water as image is the perfected nature (on 2: 4).

It seems that *ontologically* the most important of the Three Natures is the dependent nature in its various guises. Were there to be no dependent nature there could likewise be no liberation, for without a flow of perceptions there would be nothing at all.[20] According to the *Mahāyānasaṃgraha*, if there were no dependent nature then there would be no perfected nature (2: 25; Asaṅga 1938). Elsewhere it is explained (not, perhaps, with total precision) that the dependent nature is conceptualized nature in one part, and perfected nature in another. The first part is saṃsāra, the second nirvāṇa (2: 28; Asaṅga 1938). What is meant here is that the dependent nature, the flow of perceptions or experiences, as basis for erroneous construction (the conceptualized nature), is the basis for saṃsāra. As basis for realizing the true nature of things it is the basis for nirvāṇa. In everyday life we deluded people do as a matter of fact hypostatize our experiences, which in reality are all there is, and construct them into enduring objects and enduring selves. This is saṃsāra, the round of rebirth, frustration, and suffering. It is based on a fundamentally wrong understanding of what is really there. Through realizing this in meditation, coming to understand that objects and the Self are just a flow of experiences with no enduring elements set in opposition to each other (no duality), we attain enlightenment. This very same flow of experiences can be a basis for suffering in the unenlightened person, but also a basis for liberation in the saint. It becomes possible, therefore, to talk of two types of dependent nature. The tainted dependent nature is those phenomena, those perceptions, which are then projected, as it were, into supposed 'really existing' subjects and objects. Pure dependent nature is the post-meditational experience of the saint who has seen in his meditation the way things really are. It is a flow of purified perceptions, perceptions without the ignorance of construction into enduring entities.[21]

Mind

According to the eighteenth-century Tibetan lama dKon mchog 'jigs med dbang po (pronounced: Kern chok jik may wong bo) one who follows the Yogācāra tradition is a Buddhist who asserts that entities as dependent, that is, the flow of perceptions, really exist but that external objects do not (Sopa and Hopkins 1976: 107). Another Tibetan, Mi pham (1846–1914), states quite categorically that for the Yogācāra the nondual mind, mind or consciousness devoid of subject and object, really, absolutely exists (Guenther 1972: 113). Maitreya(nātha?) begins his *Madhyāntavibhāga* (see Maitreyanātha 1937) with a clear assertion

of existence which serves to differentiate the Yogācāra from the Mādhyamika: 'The imagination of the nonexistent (= 'construction of the nonexistent' (*abhūtaparikalpa*); see Urban and Griffiths 1994: 15) exists. In it duality does not exist. Emptiness, however, exists in it' (Sthiramati 1937: 10). As Vasubandhu says, commenting on the *Madhyāntavibhāga* here, when we hold that something is empty we mean that one thing is empty of another (Vasubandhu 1964). Hence in all that negation something remains, and what remains exists there as a reality.[22] This school, therefore, holds that something exists. Sthiramati adds in his subcommentary that the construction of the nonexistent exists 'from the point of view of intrinsic nature (*svabhāva*)'. Sthiramati goes on to explain that nevertheless it is not true that there is here a contradiction with the Perfection of Wisdom sūtras which maintain that all is empty, since the construction of the nonexistent ('imagination of the nonexistent') is free from duality: 'Emptiness here means being free from subject and object, and that is the imagination of the nonexistent. Emptiness is not nonexistence' (cf. *Madhyāntavibhāga* 1: 13; Vasubandhu 1964). Thus it seems that we have here a reinterpretation of the notion of emptiness, which has ceased to mean 'absence of intrinsic nature', since the construction of the nonexistent, whatever it is, is empty but nevertheless has intrinsic nature. The fundamental opposition between emptiness and intrinsic nature in the Mādhyamika, thought to entail intrinsic and hence uncaused *existence*, no longer applies. Our new opposition is emptiness versus subject-object duality. The construction of the nonexistent, Sthiramati says, 'has real [*dravyasat*] existence. Its phenomena, sense data etc., do not exist apart from it. They are unreal as independent entities . . .' (Sthiramati 1937: 11).

What precisely is this construction of the nonexistent? It is already clear from the way the term has been used that it must correspond in some way to mind or consciousness, that is, the flow of perceptions and experiences, but consciousness understood apart from its normal dualistic connotations. Sthiramati states: 'It is the bare reality, free from the differentiation into subject and object. Because sense-data etc. are not perceived outside the consciousness, the consciousness arises in the appearance of sense data etc., as in a dream' (Sthiramati 1937: 11; cf. Griffiths 1986: 87). The fundamental point here is that the construction of the nonexistent is the same as the nondual flow of perceptions (i.e. the dependent nature), but particularly when it is seen as manifesting itself (erroneously) as exterior and interior objects. Maitreyanātha explains the particular characteristic of this construction of the nonexistent as consciousness: '[C]onsciousness arises in the appearance of things, sentient beings, substance and ideas; its external object does not exist . . .' (v. 3; Sthiramati 1937: 14). The declaration in the *Madhyāntavibhāga* that the construction of the nonexistent exists should be taken therefore along with Sthiramati's assertion in his commentary to the *Triṃśikā* that the *Triṃśikā* was composed in order to counter two extremes – the one that objects have intrinsic nature in exactly the same way that consciousness does, and the other that consciousness (*pace* Mādhyamika) does not have any intrinsic nature at all (cf. Thurman 1984: 228). This nondual consciousness which has irreducible intrinsic nature, and hence has one of the fullest types of existence permissible in the Buddhist philosophical framework, is also stated to be the same actual 'thing' as the dependent nature.[23]

When, however, the dependent nature is referred to specifically as the construction of the nonexistent more often than not it appears to be the tainted dependent nature which is being considered, the dependent nature which is the basis for saṃsāra, which has as a matter of fact been constructed into subject and object (and which therefore also provides our starting point for returning, 'ascending', to 'seeing things the way they really are').

It was the doctrine of consciousness or mind as the basis for so-called 'external' objects which gave the Yogācāra tradition its various alternative names. Apparently external objects are constituted by consciousness and do not exist apart from it. Vasubandhu begins his *Viṃśatikā*: 'All this is only perception (*vijñaptimātra*), since consciousness manifests itself in the form of nonexistent objects'. There is only a flow of perceptions. Compared with its objects, however, this flow really exists, and it is mental by nature, for in terms of the Buddhist division of things effectively here it has to be either mental or physical. The flow of experiences could scarcely be a physical or material flow. As Kambala states (Lindtner 1985: 176): 'The threefold world appears under the form of the determinations of space and so on. Hence that [i.e. the appearance] is not false [as such], since it consists of perception (or "experiences"; *vijñapti*)'. There may be a danger in simply calling this 'idealism', for it is rather unlike some of the forms of idealism familiar from Western philosophy. Nevertheless, if 'idealism' means that subjects and objects (i.e. all things) are no more than a flow of experiences, perceptions, and these experiences, as experiences, are mentalistic, then perhaps this should be called a form of 'dynamic idealism' (cf. Griffiths 1986: 823).[24] As Kambala puts it (Lindtner 1985: 164), with direct reference to Mādhyamika terminology while at the same time offering a corrective to what is seen as its tendency to excessive negativism: 'Hence, absence of intrinsic existence (*niḥsvabhāvatā*) is the intrinsic nature of *dharmas* where their intrinsic nature is that of mind. Anyone who understands otherwise misses it as far as the ultimate (*paramārtha*) is concerned'. Absence of intrinsic existence, which is in Mādhyamika the same as emptiness, involves in Yogācāra that things are really, truly, of the nature of mind but does not entail here that everything without exception, including the very mind as such itself, is simply a conceptual construct.

Certain objections were recognized by the Yogācāra as capable of being levelled at their doctrine of consciousness. Vasubandhu, in his *Viṃśatikā* (1984) undertook to prove the invalidity of a number of these:[25]

(i) Spatio-temporal determination would be impossible – experiences of object *X* are not occurrent everywhere and at every time so there must be some external basis for our experiences.
(ii) Many people experience *X* and not just one person, as in the case of hallucination.
(iii) Hallucinations can be determined because they do not have pragmatic results. It does not follow that entities which we generally accept as real can be placed in the same class.

In reply Vasubandhu argues that these are no objections, they fail to show that perception-only as a teaching is unreasonable. Spatio-temporal determination can be explained on the

analogy of dream experience, where a complete and unreal world is created with objects felt to have spatio-temporal localization in spite of the fact that they do not exist apart from the mind which is cognizing them.[26] Furthermore the second objection can be met by recourse to the wider Buddhist religious framework. The hells and their tortures which are taught by Buddhist traditions as the result of wicked deeds, to be endured for a very long time until purified, are experienced as the collective products of the previous intentions (karma) of those hell inmates. The torturers and guardians of hell obviously cannot really exist, or they would have been reborn in hell themselves and would experience the suffering associated with it. If this were the case then how could they gleefully inflict sufferings upon their fellow inmates? Thus they must be illusory, and yet they are clearly experienced by a number of people. Finally, as in a dream objects have pragmatic purpose within that dream, and likewise in hell, so in everyday life. Furthermore, as actual physical activity can be directed towards unreal objects in a dream (e.g. in a wet dream) due, it is said, to some sort of nervous irritation on the part of the dreamer, so too in everyday life.

In addition to showing that the perception-only doctrine has not been refuted, Vasubandhu also attempted positively to establish the doctrine by showing that there can be no other theory adequate to explain how it is we experience objects. The 'external' object cannot be a unitary whole, since it is never experienced apart from its parts. Neither can it be made up out of parts, since these can be reduced further to their parts, and eventually to atoms. Atoms, however, are described as imperceptible, and thus gross objects as aggregates of imperceptible atoms also could not be perceived. Moreover, atoms cannot exist. If atoms are defined as the smallest pieces of physical reality then they cannot combine with other atoms in part (through partial contact), for then it would follow that atoms have parts and are thus in theory capable of further division. If they combined with other atoms totally then no matter how many atoms combined they would still occupy only the space of one atom and thus would still be imperceptible. So there can exist neither atoms nor their combination. And if the object existed as an independent reality apart from its parts one would be able to perceive the object all in one go. Hence the only way to explain perception of objects is on the analogy of a dream.

Such reasoning is, of course, also a dimension of that reasoning which makes up insight (*vipaśyanā*) meditation in the classical Yogācāra tradition. The next stage in this meditation, having negated external objects with the teaching of only mind, is said to be to negate mind itself and dwell in nonduality. The *Madhyāntavibhāga* states that 'because of the non-existence of its object, consciousness [*vijñāna*] also does not exist' (1: 3; Vasubandhu 1964). From the Abhidharma scholars it had been taken that it is of the nature of consciousness to be conscious of something. If I know, then I know something; if I see, I see something, and so on. Knowing or seeing without anything known or seen is simply not knowing or seeing at all. Thus if there is no object for consciousness then there cannot be the corresponding consciousness.[27] In recent decades certain scholars have argued from such assertions that mind in the Yogācāra tradition therefore has no greater reality than any other entity. Finally Yogācāra is ontologically no different from Mādhyamika. I remain unconvinced,

however. It seems clear in these cases that the negation of mind (*citta/vijñāna*) is not a negation of the really existing but unutterable nondual stream of consciousness in its various forms, but only of the mind as subject, that is, the perceptions which have been constructed into the subject, the perceiver, the mind as Self. As Vasubandhu says of this stage of meditation in the *Triṃśikā* (v. 29; 1984), 'that is supramundane (*lokottara*) gnosis, a no-mind without perception [of an object]'. The word 'gnosis' (or 'awareness'; *jñāna*) indicates that nondual consciousness is still present. 'Gnosis' is after all a consciousness-term. *Vijñāna* (= *vijñāpti*) turns into *jñāna*. At that stage it is a no-mind mind.[28] Sthiramati comments here:

> Because it discerns, it is *vijñāna*, consciousness; since it has no real object it neither can have the nature of a knower, a perceiver. Therefore, because the external object does not really exist, the consciousness does not exist in reality as a perceiver. But it is not the case that it does not exist as the reflection of things, sentient beings, ego-substances and ideas. For if the consciousness should not exist in that capacity, we should have to admit the absurdity of absolute nonexistence.[29]

What Sthiramati is saying here is that the flow of perceptions must really exist, otherwise there would be nothing and that is patently absurd. Thus mind in that sense, as the nondual flow of perceptions, is not being denied.

The *Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra* states that in negating mind in this context of meditation the wise man depends on nonduality and 'dwells in the *dharma*-realm, the *dharma*-expanse' (*dharmadhātu*; 6: 8; Maitreyanātha 1970).[30] One of the commentaries to this verse in the *Mahāyānasaṃgraha* makes it clear that the nonduality of the *dharma*-realm is the same as the nonduality of subject and object (the conceptualized nature). It does not necessarily negate the flow of consciousness (or perceptions and experiences as bare nonconceptual awareness) as such. The commentary adds that 'the *dharma*-realm thus seen is not false, it is the true *dharma*-realm' (Asaṅga 1938: 178). The commentary to the *Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra* itself (13: 16–19; Maitreyanātha 1970) speaks of the *dharma*-realm as an intrinsically pure consciousness, the Suchness or Thusness (*tathatā*) which is consciousness (*cittatathatā*). The point is explained quite clearly in the *Mahāyānasaṃgraha*. The dependent nature, as we have seen, has two dimensions. The first is the basis for saṃsāra, the round of deluded understanding and hence suffering that is the conceptualized nature. The second is the basis for nirvāṇa, enlightenment, cognizing the true way of things that is the perfected nature. In its first dimension the dependent nature is, inasmuch as it is acting as the basis for saṃsāra, tainted (in this respect it is often what is termed the 'construction of the nonexistent'). In its second dimension, acting as the basis for the cognition that entails nirvāṇa, it is pure. And, says the *Mahāyānasaṃgraha*, when one has burnt perception (*vijñapti*) with the fire of nonconceptual awareness (*nirvikalpajñāna*) the perfected nature which is true appears, and the nature which is construction of the nonexistent does not appear (2: 29; Asaṅga 1938). In other words there remains here a really existing, pure, nonconceptual, nondual flow of awareness.[31]

Substratum consciousness, consciousness and immaculate consciousness

All the phenomenal world depends in some sense on consciousness. However, the Yogācāra tradition was not content to leave the matter at this point. Rather, it distinguished eight types of consciousness: the five sense consciousnesses plus the mind (*manovijñāna*) – a sense which on the one hand apprehends psychic events, and on the other synthesizes experiences supplied by the other five senses – together with the 'tainted mind' (*kliṣṭamanas*), and the substratum consciousness (*ālayavijñāna*).[32] The tainted mind takes the substratum consciousness as its object and mistakenly considers the substratum consciousness to be a true Self.[33] These eight forms are the working out of the discrimination into subject and object. The substratum consciousness can be explained as this working out seen from the subjective perspective, the cause (when viewed subjectively in terms of one's own mind) responsible for or implicated one way or another in the whole cosmic manifestation. It is likened by Vasubandhu to a great torrent of water or a river (*Triṃśikā* v. 5, see Vasubandhu 1984; cf. *Saṃdhinirmocana* 5: 5, see Lamotte 1935; Waldron 2003: 97–101, 138), which is changing every moment but which nevertheless preserves a certain identity. According to Sthiramati it is actually the same 'thing' as the construction of the non-existent (on *Madhyāntavibhāga* 1: 3, see Maitreyanātha 1937; cf. *Mahāyānasaṃgraha* 1: 61, see Maitreyanātha 1970). Elsewhere, as we might expect, the *ālayavijñāna* is also identified with the dependent nature (see Kiyota 1962: 21; but cf. Griffiths 1986: 95). However clearly that cannot be strictly correct. This is because in discussing the Three Natures we saw that the dependent nature in its various forms is ontologically the one real and truly nondual flow of consciousness. The substratum consciousness, on the other hand, is spoken of as a psychological factor concerning each sentient being, one of eight (or possibly nine) types of consciousness. Clearly, as one of eight the substratum consciousness cannot be strictly identical with the one nondual flow of consciousness.

In actual fact the substratum consciousness can be seen under a number of facets. One of its chief functions is to serve as a repository for the 'seeds' (*bīja*) which explain phenomenal existence in general and personal experiences which result from previous deeds in particular. 'From whence do all things arise', asks Kambala, 'and in what do they dissolve?' The answer, he tells us, is that they arise from their own seed-impressions which are stored in the substratum consciousness.[34] The substratum consciousness is an ever-changing stream which underlies the experience of saṃsāric existence. It is said to be 'perfumed' by phenomenal acts (the 'perfumings' are *vāsanās*, impressions, or tendencies), and the seeds which are said to be the result of this perfuming reach fruition at certain times to manifest as experiences of good, bad or indifferent phenomena (see Griffiths 1992: 119–20). Hence, as Hattori (Williams 2005b: 36) observes, among other things '[t]he doctrine of *ālaya*-consciousness (*vijñāna*) is a theory which accounts for the formation of mental images without dependence on external objects'. The substratum consciousness, seen as a defiled form of consciousness (or perhaps sub- or unconsciousness), is personal, individual, continually changing and yet serving to give a degree of personal identity and to explain why it is that certain

karmic results pertain to this particular individual.[35] The seeds are momentary, but they give rise to a perfumed series which eventually culminates in the result including, from seeds of a particular type, the whole 'inter-subjective' phenomenal world.[36] This inter-subjective world is the product of seeds which are common to all relevant substratum consciousnesses, the results of appropriate common previous experiences stretching back through beginningless time. Note, therefore, that for Yogācāra there are multiple substratum consciousnesses – indeed, one for each sentient being – not just one only. It thus makes sense, it is held, to speak of the minds of other people. One need not argue, on Yogācāra grounds, that there exists only the one flow of consciousness currently and indubitably experiencing in a first-person manner (i.e. *my* consciousness). In this way Yogācāra seeks to avoid solipsism, the view that the only thing which exists is *one's own* mind.[37]

There was, however, some dispute over whether all seeds were the results of perfuming, or whether there were some seeds which were latent from all eternity in the substratum. According to Dharmapāla, followed by Xuanzang in the *Chengweishilun*, there were seeds of both types in the substratum consciousness, so that not all seeds were the results of karma (Hsüan-tsang 1973: 117–21; Cook 1999: 48–53). One interesting result of all this, to be noted in passing, is that at least some within the Yogācāra tradition seem to have maintained that certain people possess seeds only for Arhatship or Pratyekabuddha-hood, and not for full Buddhahood, so that some sentient beings would never become full Buddhas.[38] More radically, there are some beings (known as *icchantikas*, 'decadents') who lack the requisite good seeds altogether, so that by the very nature of things those beings can never become enlightened (Hsüan-tsang 1973: 123–5; cf. Cook 1999: 55–6). This view, out of step with the widely-held position that emerged in Mahāyāna that every sentient being possesses the potential for Buddhahood (associated with the Buddha-nature teachings; see Chapter 5 below), was held in East Asia by the Faxiang school that developed on the basis of Xuanzang's *Chengweishilun*.

The substratum consciousness is said to be the actual level of consciousness that transmigrates, carrying with it all its karmic seeds and producing the linkage between one life and the next.[39] Its presence in the body is also held to be what renders the body a living body and not a dead one. Hence even when we are 'unconscious' we do not die.[40] Although it apparently performs some of the functions of a Self, Yogācāra tradition denied vehemently that with the substratum consciousness it had smuggled in a Self by the back door. In the *Saṃdhinirmocana Sūtra* the Buddha forcefully states that he had not taught the substratum consciousness to the immature since they would only conceive it to be a Self (Lamotte 1935: 5: 7; Waldron 2003: 101, 120; cf. 223, n. 43). It is indeed the substratum consciousness which for this tradition is the conventional self, the referent of the word 'I', and is misapprehended by the tainted mind and taken as a real substantial Self, a permanent and stable 'I' or 'Me'. This is incorrect, however. The substratum consciousness is an ever-changing stream (e.g. *Chengweishilun*, in Hsüan-tsang 1973: 171–3; Cook 1999: 75–6), no doubt an attempt to explain the evolution of the world as experienced from consciousness, and certain problems of personal identity, but in no way something to be grasped

or attached to as a Self. According to Asaṅga and Vasubandhu it 'ceases' at enlightenment.[41] Since the substratum consciousness (with the reservations expressed above) appears to be identical in substance, i.e. the same 'thing', with the construction of the nonexistent, that is, effectively the tainted dependent nature, its cessation in the Mahāyāna context need not necessarily entail a complete cessation of consciousness or experience.[42] There has simply been a 'reversal of the basis' (*āśrayaparāvṛtti*, or *āśrayaparivṛtti*). Indeed, Asaṅga speaks in the *Mahāyānasaṃgraha* of the cessation of the personal, individual, falsifying constructions of consciousness, but not of the common, inter-subjective world, which becomes the object of a purified vision for the enlightened yogin (1938; 1: 60; cf. Waldron 2003: 160 ff.). Otherwise, of course, it might be felt that an enlightened Buddha would be incapable of helping anyone. What happens at the point when the substratum consciousness 'ceases' was, however, the subject of an intense debate, particularly in China.

According to the Indian missionary Paramārtha (499–569), who founded in China the Shelun school of Yogācāra, when the substratum consciousness ceases there remains, shining in its own purity, a ninth consciousness, the 'immaculate consciousness' (*amalavijñāna*). This consciousness is the permanent, ultimate, true reality. According to the later Faxiang school of Yogācāra, founded by Xuanzang following Dharmapāla, however, the cessation of the substratum consciousness is only a cessation of the substratum consciousness inasmuch as it is tainted. The pure consciousness which remains is the same substantial 'thing' as the flow of the substratum consciousness, but under a different name.[43] This dispute seems, as such, to have been little known in India, although the seventh-century Korean commentator Wŏnch'ŭk[44] in his commentary on the *Saṃdhinirmocana Sūtra* identified Paramārtha with the tradition of Sthiramati, and portrayed the dispute as one of those arising from the split between the school of Valabhī and that of Nālandā (Demiéville 1973: 43–4). Since the substratum consciousness, inasmuch as it is the construction of the nonexistent, to all intents and purposes here equals in substance the tainted dependent nature, it follows that the purified consciousness is a purified version of what was, when tainted, the substratum consciousness. This appears to correspond with Xuanzang's tradition. We can either speak of this purified consciousness as the purified substratum consciousness or, keeping 'substratum consciousness' for tainted consciousness, refer to it as an 'immaculate consciousness' (*amalavijñāna*). But they are effectively the same thing. Nevertheless, in Paramārtha's tradition there seems to have been a strong desire to emphasize the pure immaculate consciousness as an Absolute, the ultimate reality in the fullest possible sense, and therefore literally itself an ontologically ultimate perfected nature standing in radical opposition to the conceptualized and dependent natures.[45] From this perspective the immaculate consciousness must be quite different in substance from the substratum consciousness since, whatever it might be, the substratum consciousness is clearly not the perfected nature. Also, as a flow capable of being tainted and then purified, the substratum consciousness would seem to lack the qualities necessary for a true immaculate Absolute Reality. It is known that Paramārtha (unlike, as far as we can tell, Sthiramati) was associated with the doctrine of the *tathāgatagarbha*, the Buddha-nature, which will be

the subject of the following chapter, and it seems that this doctrine provided a basis for his teaching of the absolute and immutable *amalavijñāna*.[46]

Yet more disputes within the Yogācāra tradition

It appears from the *Chengweishilun* that Dharmapāla's tradition took very seriously and literally the *Triṃśikā* teaching of the transformation (*pariṇāma*) of consciousness. Indeed within this tradition consciousness as the flow of perceptions appears to have been thought of as a kind of substance or almost a subtle stuff which can be divided into parts. Consciousness, it is said, genuinely transforms itself into two parts (*bhāga*). The first part is the subjective awareness, called the 'seeing part' (*darśanabhāga*). The other part is that which is apprehended (*nimittabhāga*), effectively the objectified image. These correspond to experienced subject and object. The consciousness itself, which undergoes this transformation, is called the 'reflexive' or 'self-aware' part (*svasaṃvittibhāga*), or sometimes the 'essential part' (*svabhāvikabhāga*). This third part is what consciousness is in itself – all consciousness for the Yogācāra tradition is self-aware, it knows itself, reflexively knows that it knows, at the same time as it knows objects. An image often used in Yogācāra sources is that consciousness is like a lamp that illuminates itself in the very same act in which it performs its function of illuminating or making known others (cf. Hattori in Williams 2005b: 55–7). The *Chengweishilun* comments that if this dimension of consciousness did not exist there could be no memory, since one cannot remember experiences that were not formerly themselves actually experienced as such (in addition to experiencing subject and objects). If we do not *know that* we see blue at the same time as actually seeing blue, how could we remember that we saw blue, since we remember not just blue but that we *saw* blue. Thus all consciousness is also reflexive, or self-aware, and this is indeed the very feature that distinguishes consciousness from insentient things like matter.[47] According to Dharmapāla's tradition there is also a fourth part, which knows this self-aware part, although he seems to have avoided an infinite regress by stopping at this point (Hsüan-tsang 1973: 137–45; Cook 1999: 60–4). Since these are genuine transformations of consciousness the primordial mistake lies not in the notion of subject and object as such, but rather in considering them to be intrinsically separate entities when really they are the same substance, consciousness. Duality is false, not the world seen through nondual perception. Thus the conceptualized nature is the conception of duality. The actual subjects and objects themselves, seen as nondual images of consciousness, are true and make up the dependent nature in its various guises.

For Sthiramati, however, it appears that from the final point of view none of this has taken place. There is no real transformation of consciousness. It is all the result of mistaken apprehension. In reality, meaning from the point of view of an enlightened being, there is only the nondual flow of pure and presumably contentless consciousness. Sthiramati quotes from a text which states that in nonconceptual awareness (*nirvikalpajñāna*) all *dharmas* (i.e. all things) are experienced as like the surface of an empty sky (Schmithausen 2005: 54). There is no actual partition of consciousness into different parts – this is only our way of

speaking from an unenlightened perspective. There are, therefore, no subjects and objects. The very notion of subject and object is duality, and thus erroneous perception (Frauwallner 1956: 396; May 1971: 299).

These disputes may also relate in some way to the 'with-form/without-form' (*sākāra/nirākāra*) debate.[48] Dimensions of this theme were a major topic of contention in late Indian Yogācāra. But we should first note an ambiguity. The 'with-form/without-form' distinction is used in two slightly different contexts: (i) with reference to everyday perception; (ii) with reference to the perception of a Buddha. As regards (i), normal everyday cognition, many Yogācāras were inclined to a 'with-form' perspective.[49]

Starting with normal everyday cognition, in general the problem centred on the issue of whether consciousness took the form (*ākāra*; 'phenomenological content') of the object or not.[50] In seeing blue there is a blue image in one's awareness. The blue image is a sense-datum, a perception which (it was argued) must be 'awareness of blue'. As awareness it is hence consciousness in the form of blue. Precisely because consciousness has itself taken the form of blue it was argued that there is no longer any need to posit a further external object outside the processes of consciousness. In seeing blue there is no need for anything other than awareness of blue, a state of consciousness. That is enough. Why posit an external extra-mental object over and above the form, the mental objective-image, which consciousness has taken?

But if consciousness takes the form of the object then an awareness which perceives that form is not mistaken, in at least one major respect. If consciousness does take the form 'blue', say, then an awareness which perceives blue is correct inasmuch as it perceives blue, although it is mistaken, of course, in thinking that blue (or a blue object) is an independent external reality.

It is true for many if not all Yogācāras that, from the point of view of deluded everyday cognition, consciousness has taken the form of the object. But the problem arises when we consider enlightened cognition, particularly that of the Buddha. A Buddha has no delusion, but constantly enjoys a pure nonconceptual awareness. If the form which consciousness takes as blue is genuinely true, albeit in reality free from duality in terms of the substance, the 'stuff' involved (a 'with-form' position) then it could in some way be seen even by the Buddha's nonconceptual awareness (see Urban and Griffiths 1994: 17–21). If, however, it is false and truly there is only a pure radiant flow of contentless consciousness which is like a mirror free of all images ('without-form' position) then the Buddha would not see forms such as blue at all. Yogācāras who hold that truly, ultimately, consciousness is nonconceptual, radiant and completely pure would hence incline towards a 'without-form' perspective from the point of view of the final truth, as seen by a Buddha. As ultimate, a Buddha's radiant pure nonconceptual consciousness simply cannot be stained at all by forms or images of objects.[51]

There remains however a problem in understanding how, granted the 'without-form' perspective, an enlightened Buddha can therefore aid sentient beings in their spiritual and mundane welfare. The commonly-stated position, in Yogācāra and in later Mādhyamika,

is that a Buddha enjoys five types of direct unmediated gnosis (*jñāna*). There is his perfect and constant understanding of all things as they truly are (*dharmadhātujñāna*), his 'mirrorlike' unperturbed impartial reflection of all things (*ādarśajñāna*; see Griffiths 1990, sect. 5), and his insight into the equality or sameness of all things (*samatājñāna*), while also discerning each thing clearly in all its aspects (*pratyavekṣaṇajñāna*), and cognizing exactly what is appropriate in each situation in order to act as a Buddha for the benefit of all sentient beings (*kṛtyānuṣṭhānajñāna*). But on the 'without-form' perspective, continually immersed in contentless nonconceptual awareness, it might be surmised that an enlightened Buddha would not even see the common world, let alone beings which inhabit it.[52] The Buddha's omniscience would be aware of no more than its own nature.

Well, it is not easy to know what it is actually like to be a Buddha.[53] But plausibly partisans of the 'without-form' position may have answered this problem with reference to the pure spontaneity of the Buddha's activity. As a result of intense vows and the development of compassion while following the Bodhisattva path to full Buddhahood, upon achieving the state of a Buddha it is no longer necessary actually to apprehend beings themselves in order to help them. Through aeons of practice compassion has become automatic, in fact spontaneous. In achieving Buddhahood the ability to help has been perfected too. None of this requires actually apprehending any person who is helped, or indeed any situations requiring help. As we have seen in looking at the Perfection of Wisdom literature, a Bodhisattva who sees a being who is actually helped is roundly declared by the Buddha to be no true Bodhisattva at all.

5 The Tathāgatagarbha

It would probably be a mistake to think of the Tathāgatagarbha tradition in Buddhism as a school in the way that the Mādhyamika and Yogācāra traditions are schools.[1] The work which came to be seen (at least in Tibet) as the root treatise (*śāstra*) of the tradition, the *Ratnagotravibhāga*, together with its commentary, the *Vyākhyā*, seems to have been composed in India by the fifth century CE.[2] But if we can judge by quotations in other works it is debatable how far the *Ratnagotravibhāga* and its commentary exerted any obvious or direct influence on the development of Indian Buddhist philosophical thought prior to about the eleventh century. In Tibet, where there are said to be only two Mahāyāna philosophical schools, Mādhyamika and Yogācāra (Cittamātra), scholars have differed sharply over the allegiance of the *Ratnagotravibhāga*. The very fact of their disagreement suggests that the Tathāgatagarbha tradition cannot be obviously and immediately equated with either of the two schools. In China, where the Tathāgatagarbha teaching was of crucial importance, Fazang (Fa-tsang) in the seventh century saw the Tathāgatagarbha doctrine as a distinct tradition from Yogācāra and Mādhyamika, and spoke of the Tathāgatagarbha sūtras as representing a fourth turning of the ever-mobile Dharma Wheel.[3] There may be some doctrinal connection, as yet unclear, between the Tathāgatagarbha tenets and the teaching of Paramārtha's Shelun Yogācāra in China, and also the 'without-form' Yogācāra. Nevertheless, a number of important Yogācāra doctrines, such as the Three Natures and the substratum consciousness, are missing from our earliest Tathāgatagarbha sources. It must be admitted, however, that the history of early Yogācāra in India is obscure in the extreme and largely unknown. Takasaki has argued that Tathāgatagarbha started as a distinct Buddhist tradition but was prevented from forming a separate school through subsequent absorption into the Yogācāra, particularly through a simple equation of the *tathāgatagarbha* – understood as the Buddha-essence, or Buddha-nature – with the substratum consciousness (*ālayavijñāna*). This suggestion is asserted most notably and influentially in the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra*.[4] In spite of this, the importance of the Tathāgatagarbha teaching is sufficiently great, and its doctrinal allegiance sufficiently obscure, to warrant here, perhaps, a separate though cautious treatment.

Some Tathāgatagarbha Sūtras

Grammatically the expression *tathāgatagarbha* is in itself amenable to a range of translations. But according to Michael Zimmermann, in his significant study of the *Tathāgatagarbha Sūtra* (2002), its most natural and perhaps its oldest meaning would probably be 'containing a Tathāgata', containing a Buddha. Hence the important statement found in Tathāgatagarbha sources *sarvasattvās tathāgatagarbhāḥ* would mean 'all sentient beings contain a Tathāgata'. Sentient beings are likened to lotuses, each with a fully-enlightened Buddha seated cross-legged in their centre.[5] But the word *garbha* in Sanskrit also means, e.g., both the 'womb/matrix', and 'seed/embryo', as well as the 'innermost part' of something.[6] All these senses should also be borne in mind in understanding the full implications of the expression *tathāgatagarbha* in the range of Tathāgatagarbha sources. Thus the expression can also imply that sentient beings have a Tathāgata within them in seed or embryo, that sentient beings are the wombs or matrices of the Tathāgata, or that they have a Tathāgata as their essence, core, or essential inner nature. Other and later uses of *tathāgatagarbha* in this way refer to a particular type of thing within sentient beings, e.g. all sentient beings have within them the *tathāgatagarbha*, the 'embryo' or 'innermost core/essence', of a Tathāgata.[7]

Probably the earliest scripture (in origins dating from perhaps the second half of the third century CE) to teach specifically the Tathāgatagarbha doctrine was the appropriately named *Tathāgatagarbha Sūtra*.[8] This is a relatively short sūtra consisting almost entirely of nine examples to illustrate the way a Tathāgata is contained hidden within sentient beings. According to the Chinese version of the sūtra the Buddha observes with his divine eye that:

> [A]ll the living beings, though they are among the defilements of hatred, anger and ignorance, have the Buddha's wisdom, Buddha's Eye, Buddha's Body sitting firmly in the form of meditation. – Thus, in spite of their being covered with defilements, transmigrating from one path . . . to another, they are possessed of the Matrix of the Tathāgata [*tathāgatagarbha* = 'contain a Tathāgata'], endowed with virtues, always pure, and hence are not different from me. – Having thus observed, the Buddha preached the doctrine in order to remove the defilements and manifest the Buddha-nature (within the living beings).
>
> (Takasaki 1958: 51)[9]

The sūtra adds that this is the true nature of things (*dharmatā*), that whether Buddhas occur or do not occur nevertheless the *tathāgatagarbhas* of beings are eternal and unchanging (or, as it is interpreted in the Tibetan version, 'nevertheless all sentient beings contain a Tathāgata').

This is not a doctrinally systematic sūtra. Rather, it is exhortatory, intended to encourage Buddhist practitioners and to promote the Mahāyāna, its superiority and universality.[10] Zimmermann (2002: 76) observes in particular that the authors of the early Tathāgatagarbha sūtras do not seem to have gone out of their way to draw any specific ethical implications

from the idea that all sentient beings possess a Tathāgata deep within them. He notes: 'This absence of ethical implications indicates that the (early) buddha-nature theory centered on the importance of the individual's inclusion in the "family of the buddhas" rather than on a doctrinal basis for ethical behavior.'[11]

The *Tathāgatagarbha Sūtra* may also have been intended simply to answer the question how it is possible for all sentient beings to attain Buddhahood. What can it be about sentient beings that makes this a possibility? This topic may have become serious in the light of the the *Lotus Sūtra* (which was in origin almost certainly earlier than the *Tathāgatagarbha Sūtra*; see Chapter 7 below) and its teaching of the One Vehicle (*ekayāna*), which could indeed have influenced the *Tathāgatagarbha Sūtra* and which holds that ultimately there is only the vehicle to full Buddhahood, i.e. the Mahāyāna, and not separate paths of the Arhat or Pratyekabuddha at all. Thus the only final goal is that of a Tathāgata.[12] But how is it possible that anyone at all can realistically set out on this long and wonderful path to Buddhahood, this Mahāyāna? The teaching of the *tathāgatagarbha* appears to suggest that sentient beings are in reality in some sense deep down already, even now, fully-enlightened Buddhas, or intimately associated with such a state of enlightenment. However there is admittedly some tension here with other parts of the sūtra which speak of beings becoming Buddhas at some point in the future.[13] This tension between innate, intrinsic enlightenment and becoming enlightened is a tension (perhaps a fertile tension) at the root of the Tathāgatagarbha tradition, different resolutions of which are central to subsequent doctrinal elaboration.

It has been argued that the assertion in the *Tathāgatagarbha Sūtra* that all sentient beings have within them a fully-enlightened Buddha should be linked with an earlier assertion in what is now part of the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* (see Chapter 6 below) that all beings have within them the Tathāgata-gnosis or Tathāgata-awareness (*tathāgatajñāna*).[14] Hence whatever it is about sentient beings that enables them to become fully enlightened Buddhas must be related in some way to their minds. Sentient beings have within them something of the Buddha, inherently pure but apparently in an obscured and tainted state. Enlightenment lies in removing the taints in order to allow this inherently pure nature to shine forth. The presence or fact of *tathāgatagarbha*, 'containing a Tathāgata', is that truth about each being – a truth related to their minds – which enables enlightenment to take place. The claim that all sentient beings contain this element is the claim that all sentient beings without exception have whatever is necessary within them to realize the presence of that gnosis which is radiant and full Buddhahood, and for that enlightened gnosis to remain forever.

Perhaps the most important Tathāgatagarbha sūtra, at least in terms of citations in later Indian sources, is the *Śrīmālādevīsiṃhanāda Sūtra*, the 'Lion's Roar of Queen Śrīmālā'. It has been suggested that this sūtra was originally a Mahāsāṃghika scripture composed in the Deccan in South India (Andhra) during the third century CE.[15] The point remains controversial, however. The text as it stands draws a sharp contrast between the non-Mahāyāna saints on the one hand and fully-enlightened Buddhas on the other. The Arhats and Pratyekabuddhas have not finished with karma and they will indeed be reborn. They

are far from the 'nirvāṇa-realm' (Buddhahood; Wayman and Wayman 1974: 80 ff.). The *tathāgatagarbha* is the domain of the Buddha alone, it is not realized by the non-Mahāyāna saints and is not within the realm of logic and reasoning (*ibid.*: 96). For the *Śrīmālā Sūtra*, 'whoever does not doubt that the Tathāgatagarbha is wrapped-up in all the defilement-store, also does not doubt that the Dharmakāya of the Tathāgata is liberated from all the defilement store' (*ibid.*). The *dharmakāya* is the 'Dharma-body' of the Buddha, it is what the Buddha is in himself, what he really is, or in other words, it is generally (at least in Mahāyāna Buddhism) the final, true, ultimate, reality or state of things.[16] The *dharmakāya* is:

> beginningless, uncreate, unborn, undying, free from death; permanent, steadfast, calm, eternal; intrinsically pure, free from all the defilement-store; and accompanied by Buddha natures more numerous than the sands of the Ganges, which are nondiscrete, knowing as liberated, and inconceivable. This Dharmakāya of the Tathāgata when not free from the store of defilement [i.e. the *kleśas*, 'passions'] is referred to as the Tathāgatagarbha.
>
> (Wayman and Wayman 1974: 98)

In this sūtra, therefore, '*tathāgatagarbha*' is the name given to the *dharmakāya*, which is in reality permanent and unchanging, when it is, as it were, obscured by defilements in the unenlightened person. Moreover this *dharmakāya*, far from being a characterless Absolute, is possessed of innumerable good qualities. In a crucial passage the *Śrīmālā Sūtra* explains that the *tathāgatagarbha* is empty, void, but not empty in the Mādhyamika sense of lacking intrinsic existence. Rather:

> [T]he Tathāgatagarbha is void of all the defilement-stores, which are discrete and knowing as not liberated [or 'apart from knowledge which does not lead to liberation'; Chang 1983: 378] . . . the Tathāgatagarbha is not void of the Buddha *dharmas* which are nondiscrete, inconceivable, more numerous than the sands of the Ganges, and knowing as liberated.
>
> (*ibid.*: 99)

'Empty' or 'void' here means, as in the Yogācāra tradition, that a basis lacks something. The basis here is referred to as '*tathāgatagarbha*' or '*dharmakāya*' depending on whether we are speaking of unenlightened beings with obscurations or enlightened beings. The *tathāgatagarbha* is said to be a basis which is permanent, steadfast, and eternal (*ibid.*: 104–5). It is also the basis for saṃsāra, the round of rebirth. Using language rather like that of certain Brāhmanical Hindu traditions (the *Bhagavadgītā*, for example), it is suggested that from a conventional everyday point of view we can speak of the *tathāgatagarbha* as undergoing rebirth, although actually neither is it born nor does it die (*ibid.*). Moreover: '[I]f there were no Tathāgatagarbha, there would be neither aversion towards suffering nor longing, eagerness, and aspiration towards Nirvāṇa' (*ibid.*: 105). The *tathāgatagarbha* is the basis of aspiration towards nirvāṇa because it is the *tathāgatagarbha* which experiences suffering. There can be no experience and retention (no learning from experience) in the case of

an impermanent flow of everyday consciousness (*ibid.*: 105–6). Something permanent is needed, it is implied, to unify experience and thereby draw spiritually significant lessons. This *tathāgatagarbha*, however, is no Self. There is no actual Self within the realm of impure saṃsāra, and the *tathāgatagarbha* is the very basis of saṃsāra:

> [T]he Tathāgatagarbha is neither self nor sentient being, nor soul, nor personality. The Tathāgatagarbha is not the domain of beings who fall into the belief in a real personality, who adhere to wayward views, whose thoughts are distracted by voidness. . . .
> (Wayman and Wayman 1974: 106)

The *dharmakāya*, however, 'has the perfection of permanence [or "transcendent permanence" etc.], the perfection of pleasure, the perfection of self, the perfection of purity. Whatever sentient beings see the Dharmakāya of the Tathāgata that way, see correctly' (*ibid.*: 102).

Since the *tathāgatagarbha* is only the name given to the same 'thing' which in enlightenment is the *dharmakāya*, and the *dharmakāya* has the perfection of Self, so the *tathāgatagarbha* is not Self only inasmuch as it is saṃsāric, egoistic. From an enlightened perspective the same thing can be spoken of as a True or Transcendent Self. And finally, the *Śrīmālā Sūtra* makes it clear that this basis or substratum, the appearance of which as defiled entails saṃsāra, the realization of the inherent purity of which is nirvāṇa, is in reality intrinsically pure, radiant consciousness (*ibid.*: 106–7). This consciousness is intrinsically pure, never defiled, and yet its apparent defilement is the cause of bondage. This is a mystery understandable only to the Buddhas and advanced Bodhisattvas, and approachable only through faith:[17] 'It is difficult to understand the meaning of the intrinsically pure consciousness in a condition of defilement. . . . [T]he consciousness intrinsically pure is difficult to understand; and the defilement of that consciousness is difficult to understand' (*ibid.*: 106–7).

The Mahāyāna *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* (not to be confused with the non-Mahāyāna sūtra of the same name, represented in the Pali tradition by the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta*) is a long sūtra which exists in a number of versions the textual history of which is extremely complicated.[18] This sūtra is particularly noteworthy in our present context for two reasons. First, the latest sections of the sūtra translated into Chinese (with rather obscure origins) teach the universality of enlightenment, the presence of the *tathāgatagarbha* and eventual Buddhahood even in the case of really wicked, evil people who apparently have no spiritual basis whatsoever (the *icchantikas*; cf. Chapter 4 above) and who were given no hope by at least some in the Yogācāra tradition. All sentient beings without exception possess (as it is put in Chinese) the Buddha-nature. The publication of these sections in China caused something of a stir, particularly in the circle around Daosheng (Tao-sheng; *c.* 360?–434 CE). Daosheng had already taught that all beings will eventually attain Buddhahood, in spite of the fact that the earlier sections of the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* said otherwise in the case of the *icchantikas*, the decadent 'no-hopers'. He was accordingly branded some sort of heretic. When the later sections were translated he was vindicated and much admired for his wisdom and understanding.[19]

The second reason why the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* is important for our purposes is that it asserts in a particularly direct way that the Buddha-essence or Buddha-nature present in each and every sentient being, is nothing other than the Self (*ātman*; for textual references see Zimmermann 2002: 83, n. 176). This is in direct contrast with some other sūtras which are very careful to avoid the use of terms like 'Self' in connection with the *tathāgatagarbha*.[20] According to the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra*:

> 'Self' is the meaning of '*tathāgatagarbha*'. The Buddha-element (= *buddhadhātu*) certainly exists in all sentient beings. Moreover it is obscured by various defilements and is therefore not able to be seen by sentient beings in the way in which it exists.[21]

Of course, this Self is not a Self in the worldly sense taught by non-Buddhist thinkers, or maintained to exist by the much-maligned 'man in the street'. The Buddha taught the not-Self doctrine in order to overcome the egoistic Self which is the basis for attachment and grasping (see the translation in Ruegg 1973: 81–2). Elsewhere in the large and heterogeneous *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* the Buddha seems rather to portray his teaching of the *tathāgatagarbha* as being or entailing a Self as a strategy to convert non-Buddhists. It is said that some non-Buddhist ascetics see the Buddha and would follow him were he not a nihilist who taught not-Self. The Buddha knows their thoughts: 'I do not say that all sentient beings lack a Self. I always say that sentient beings have the Buddha-nature (*svabhāva*). Is not that very Buddha-nature a Self? So I do not teach a nihilistic doctrine.'[22] The Buddha adds that it is because all sentient beings do not see the Buddha-nature that he teaches the four signs of impermanence, not-Self, suffering, and impurity. It is this that is thought to be a nihilistic doctrine. He has taught Self where there is really not-Self, and not-Self where there is really Self. This is not false but the Buddha's skill-in-means, his cleverness in applying helpful stratagems. Here the Buddha-nature is really not-Self, but it is said to be a Self in a manner of speaking. Elsewhere the sūtra speaks of three misunderstandings: (i) where there is not-Self to conceive of a Self; (ii) where there is Self to conceive of not-Self; and (iii) to meditate on not-Self, maintaining that according to worldly beings there is a Self but in the teaching of the Buddha there is no such Self, and what is more there does not exist even the expression *tathāgatagarbha* (f. 147a). The Buddha teaches not-Self in certain contexts, but also a Self in others. What exactly that Self is in the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra*, however, is not determined beyond its being that within each sentient being which enables him or her to become a Buddha (cf. Liu 1982: esp. 82 ff.).

One thing anyway is clear. The *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* teaches a really existing, permanent element (Tibetan: *yang dag khams*) in sentient beings. It is this element which enables sentient beings to become Buddhas. It is beyond egoistic self-grasping – indeed the very opposite of self-grasping – but it otherwise fulfils several of the requirements of a Self in the Indian tradition. Whether this is called the Real, True, Transcendental Self or not is as such immaterial, but what is historically interesting is that this sūtra in particular (although joined by some other Tathāgatagarbha sūtras) is prepared to use the word

'Self' (*ātman*) for this element. However one looks at it the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* is quite self-consciously modifying or criticizing the not-Self traditions of Buddhism, at least as doctrinal expressions.[23] Early Buddhism had spoken of the four cardinal errors of seeing permanence where there is impermanence, happiness where there is only suffering, Self where there is not-Self, and purity where there is impurity. This sūtra is quite categoric in asserting that the error here lies in looking in the wrong direction – in other words that finally there is an equal error in seeing impermanence where there is permanence, suffering where there is happiness, not-Self where there is Self, and impurity where there is purity, in failing to see the positive element in Buddhahood which contrasts with the negative realm of unenlightenment.

These Tathāgatagarbha sūtras are associated with the Gupta period, the high period of vigorous classical Brāhmanic 'Hindu' culture. There is some evidence in the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* itself of yet another crisis in the wake of this Brāhmanic renaissance (Nakamura 1980: 213–14). It is tempting to speak of 'Hindu influence' on Buddhism at this point, but simply to talk of influences is almost always too easy. One tradition will only ever influence another if the tradition which is influenced is capable of making sense of the influences in terms of its own tradition. The influenced tradition is already halfway there. There is never at that time a complete change of direction. There was already within Buddhism a long tradition of positive language about nirvāṇa and the Buddha, relating this to an experiential core found within meditation. Having said that, of course the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* itself admits wider Indian and Brāhmanic influence in a sense when it refers to the Buddha using the term 'Self' in order to win over non-Buddhist ascetics. Nevertheless, it would be wrong to think in particular of the transcendental Self-Brahman of Advaita Vedānta as influencing Buddhism at this point. It is by no means clear that the Self which is truly not-Self of the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* is at all really comparable (let alone identical) to the Advaita Brahman, and anyway these Tathāgatagarbha sūtras are no doubt earlier than Gauḍapāda (seventh century), the founder of the Hindu Advaita school, who appears to have been considerably influenced himself by Buddhism – possibly the very form of Buddhism which was evolved in the Tathāgatagarbha texts.[24]

The *Tathāgatagarbha* in the *Ratnagotravibhāga*

The *Ratnagotravibhāga* (otherwise known as the *Uttaratantra*) is said in Tibet to be a treatise of Maitreya – Bodhisattva or human author as the case may be. The commentary is attributed to Asaṅga. Maitreya was regarded as the author in Central Asia and probably India from about the eighth century. In China, however, where the *Ratnagotravibhāga* and its commentary were translated in 511 CE, from the time of Fazang (Fa-tsang; 643–712) onwards they were both regarded as the work of a certain Sāramati. This Sāramati appears to be unknown in the Indo-Tibetan tradition. In point of fact the *Ratnagotravibhāga* may well be a heterogeneous text (Ruegg 1969: 11), and the issue of authorship as such is probably insoluble at the present time. Although it shows some similarities with the position of Yogācāra,

it would be wrong to assume automatically that the *Ratnagotravibhāga* stems from the same origins or circle as the Yogācāra texts attributed to Maitreya and Asaṅga.[25]

One of the features of Tibetan Buddhism in contrast with that of East Asia is the strong tendency to approach the sūtras indirectly through the medium of exegetical treatises if at all. The *Ratnagotravibhāga* has played a relatively small role in East Asian Buddhism, where the primacy has always been given to sūtra study. In addition, the *Ratnagotravibhāga* seems to have been overshadowed there and eventually eclipsed by the *Dasheng qixinlun* (*Ta-sheng ch'i-hsin lun*; 'Awakening of Faith in the Mahāyāna'), a treatise attributed to Aśvaghoṣa (first or second century CE) which was more congenial perhaps to Chinese taste and was very likely composed in China itself. In Tibet, on the other hand, all discussion of the *tathāgatagarbha* starts from the interpretation of the *Ratnagotravibhāga* and its *Vyākhyā* (known together in Tibet as the *rGyud bla ma*, pronounced: Gyer Lama). The commentary, however, is itself largely composed of sūtra excerpts together with their systematic clarificatory exposition. As such the teaching of the *Ratnagotravibhāga* is really an exposition of the teaching found already most notably in the *Śrīmālā Sūtra*.

The *Ratnagotravibhāga* (which will be taken to include the commentary) speaks of two types of Suchness (or Thusness, *tathatā*, another word for the ultimate way of things) – tainted and untainted or immaculate Suchness. The tainted Suchness, in other words the true nature obscured, is the *tathāgatagarbha*. The immaculate Suchness is the *dharmakāya*.[26] According to Takasaki the relation of the *tathāgatagarbha* to the 'Absolute' (by which he means here the *dharmakāya*) is that of cause to result (1966: 24). Since, however, these are both Suchness there is no real difference of base or substratum, which is the same throughout. The *tathāgatagarbha* and the *dharmakāya* are in reality, as we have seen, the same thing – the same basis or substance. In itself Suchness is said to be 'unchangeable by nature, sublime and perfectly pure' (*ibid.*: 287). The commentary explains that what we are referring to here is consciousness, radiant by nature, pure and nondual. That the tainted Suchness (= *tathāgatagarbha*) can at the same time be pure and yet defiled; that even defiled beings have within them the qualities of a Buddha; that the untainted Suchness can be not defiled and yet purified; and that the Buddha's activities are everywhere perfectly spontaneous and non-conceptual, and are yet perfectly apt – all these four points are said to be inconceivable, a Holy Mystery (*ibid.*: 188 ff.):

> The Highest Truth of the Buddhas
> Can be understood only by faith,
> Indeed, the eyeless one cannot see
> The blazing disc of the sun.
> (Takasaki 1966: 296; cf. pp. 380 ff.)

Since all sentient beings have within them the *tathāgatagarbha* as tainted consciousness, and since that consciousness when pure is the *dharmakāya*; since also this consciousness has never really been tainted (its intrinsic nature is pure), and untainted consciousness, the *dharmakāya*, is nondual, makes no distinctions, so it is possible to speak of the

Buddha's *dharmakāya*, his Dharma-body, or pure radiant consciousness, as all-pervading (*ibid.*: 189 ff., 233–4). Likewise the *dharmakāya* pervading all as the Tathāgata's pure gnosis or awareness (*jñāna*) is in reality unchanging. It only appears from the position of primeval ignorance, delusion, to be tainted (*ibid.*: 234 ff.). Nevertheless, from the position of saṃsāric ignorance the *Ratnagotravibhāga* speaks of the Buddha-nature as tainted in the case of ordinary beings, partly tainted and partly purified in the case of Bodhisattvas, and perfectly pure in the case of Buddhas (*ibid.*: 230 ff.). All these impurities are merely adventitious, they are not essential, they are not part of the pure consciousness itself. The Buddha qualities, on the other hand, are essential to it, so that when the mind is cleaned, polished (but only 'as it were', since from the point of view of the ultimate truth, mind itself in its own unchangeable pristine nature, this cleansing is unnecessary and unreal) the Buddha qualities (the ten powers of perfect knowledge etc., *ibid.*: 338 ff.) will naturally shine forth. Thus:

> Here there is nothing to be removed
> And absolutely nothing to be added;
> The Truth should be perceived as it is,
> And he who sees the Truth becomes liberated.
>
> The Essence (of the Buddha) is (by nature) devoid [empty]
> Of the accidental (pollutions) which differ from it;
> But it is by no means devoid of the highest properties
> Which are, essentially, indivisible from it.
>
> (Takasaki 1966: 300–1)

In reality there is no defiling element to be removed, no purifying element to be added, since the Buddha qualities are an intrinsic part of the *dharmakāya* itself, and the *dharmakāya* is inherent in sentient beings as the *tathāgatagarbha*. Thus nirvāṇa, rather than the actual cessation or extinction of anything like suffering, ignorance, or illusion, is now portrayed as nonorigination (Grosnick 1981). This nonorigination (of *kleśas*; defilements, passions, or taints) is Buddhahood and the one and only real final Buddhist 'goal', a goal that has already and always been achieved.[27]

The real meaning of emptiness, the commentary says, is that one thing lacks another. What remains, as with the Yogācāra, is really there. In this sense the Buddha-nature is indeed empty. It is empty of adventitious defilements which simply do not exist at all from the point of view of its own innate purity.[28] On the other hand, the *Ratnagotravibhāga* states that the *tathāgatagarbha* is not empty in the sense that it is itself 'like an illusion'. This suggests that the *tathāgatagarbha* is not (on the Mādhyamika model) empty of its own intrinsic existence. The text wonders then why it has been said (in the Perfection of Wisdom literature, for example) that all things are unreal, like clouds, a dream or illusions when the *tathāgatagarbha* is here said to exist in sentient beings? The reply is that the teaching of the *tathāgatagarbha* removes five defects which can be found (or perhaps are even

encouraged) in the doctrine of universal emptiness of intrinsic existence: depression; contempt towards those who are inferior; clinging to the unreal; denial of the real; and excessive self-love. The *Ratnagotravibhāga* continues that this is the highest teaching (*uttaratantra*, the other name by which this text is known), and it teaches the existence of the Buddha-nature (*buddhadhātu*). Depression regarding one's own spiritual potential, for example, is overcome by realizing that one contains within a Tathāgata; a sense of superiority too is eradicated by understanding that all sentient beings likewise contain a Tathāgata. Without the teaching of the Buddha-nature there can be no understanding of the equality between oneself and others. Hence the Bodhisattva may be prone to excessive self-love.[29]

Finally, let us note one point where the *Ratnagotravibhāga* appears, perhaps, to modify or strive to ameliorate the teaching of the Tathāgatagarbha sūtras. Our text is concerned to explain the sūtra references to the *tathāgatagarbha/dharmakāya* as the perfection of Self. According to the Sanskrit version of the text, 'Self' here is interpreted to be another name for 'not-Self', as is sometimes found in works (such as the Perfection of Wisdom sūtras) which use superficially paradoxical expressions such as 'standing by way of no standing'. The Chinese version, however, could be older and appears to be rather different. The Buddha is said to have a True Self (*shiwo*; *shih-wo*) which is beyond being and nonbeing.[30] It is possible that later versions of the *Ratnagotravibhāga* text attempted to neutralize here the apparently radical assertion of Self found in the Tathāgatagarbha sūtra tradition.

Tibet – the *gzhan stong* and *rang stong* dispute

In portraying the *tathāgatagarbha* theory found in the sūtras and *Ratnagotravibhāga* I have assumed that these texts mean what they say. In terms of the categories of Buddhist hermeneutics I have spoken as though the Tathāgatagarbha sūtras were to be taken as definitive (*nītārtha*) works, and their meaning is quite explicit and is to be taken literally. The *tathāgatagarbha* teaching, however, appears at first glance to be rather different from that of Mādhyamika. Indeed, Takasaki has argued that the *tathāgatagarbha* doctrine arose in conscious opposition to the Mādhyamika doctrine of emptiness (see de Jong 1979: 585), and we have seen evidence to support this view. Were I a Tibetan scholar who took the Prāsaṅgika Mādhyamika emptiness doctrine as the highest teaching of the Buddha, however, I would have to interpret the *tathāgatagarbha* teaching some way or another in order to dissolve any apparent disagreement.[31] In Tibet we find a major doctrinal rift between those teachers and traditions which took the *tathāgatagarbha* doctrines definitively and indeed literally, and saw them as representing the final, highest, doctrinal teachings of the Buddha, and those teachers and schools which insisted that these are not as they stand literal teachings but need some sort of interpretation and were taught by the Buddha in this form with a specific purpose in order to help particular people.[32]

Pre-eminent among those traditions for whom the *tathāgatagarbha* teachings were to be interpreted was (and is) the dGe lugs pa school (sometimes known in China and the West

as the Yellow Hats) founded by Tsong kha pa in the late fourteenth century. This is, incidentally, the tradition to which the Dalai Lama belongs. According to Tsong kha pa (following the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra* and Candrakīrti) the difference between the *tathāgatagarbha* doctrine and the Self teachings of non-Buddhists lies in the Buddha's intention in giving the *tathāgatagarbha* teaching. If this doctrine were taken literally it would indeed be no different from the non-Buddhist Self theory.[33] The Buddha, however, taught the *tathāgatagarbha* teaching for a purpose. He did not intend it to be taken in its *prima-facie* form as it stands (teaching some sort of intrinsically existent immutable ultimate reality, or True Self, for example) as a literally true doctrine. Rather, through his compassion, he intended it as a means to introduce non-Buddhists to Buddhism. Moreover, when the Buddha spoke of the *tathāgatagarbha* what he was really referring to, the real truth behind his teaching, was none other than emptiness (*śūnyatā*) understood in its Mādhyamika sense as simply a negation, absence of intrinsic existence (see translation by Thurman 1984: 347–50). After all, the *tathāgatagarbha* is said to be that within sentient beings which enables them to attain Buddhahood. This is emptiness, absence of intrinsic existence, which enables sentient beings to change into Buddhas. Remember that emptiness is an implication of dependent origination, and dependent origination entails impermanence and change. Understood correctly, in this way, there is then no problem in taking the Tathāgatagarbha texts as texts teaching the final truth. In other words, once they are properly understood we can then take the Tathāgatagarbha texts as Mādhyamika texts (indeed, for Tsong kha pa and his tradition Prāsaṅgika Mādhyamika texts) teaching emptiness in the Mādhyamika sense. The Tathāgatagarbha texts then need not be taken as works requiring interpretation in some further sense (*neyārtha*) but can rather be given the full prestige of definitive (*nītārtha*) texts.

Even so, however, the *tathāgatagarbha* is not just any emptiness. Rather it is specifically emptiness of intrinsic existence when applied to a sentient being's mind, his or her mental continuum. That is, emptiness here is the emptiness of intrinsic existence of the mind, which entails that it is a changing mind, a mental flow. In Mādhyamika to be empty and to be caused are the same, so that if the mind changes then it must be empty of intrinsic existence. Thus when we say that all sentient beings have within them the Buddha-essence or the Buddha-nature we mean that all sentient beings have minds which can change and become Buddha's minds. Since in Tibetan Buddhism the flow of mind is generally said to be eternal, with no beginning or end, so we can say that the mind, and therefore its emptiness, are eternal (Hopkins 1983: 382). It is moreover this emptiness which is referred to when we speak of the mind's 'intrinsic purity'. When the mind is defiled in the unenlightened state this emptiness is called the *tathāgatagarbha*. When the mind has become pure through following the path and attaining Buddhahood emptiness is then referred to in the dGe lugs tradition as the Buddha's Essence Body (*svabhāvikakāya*). The Buddha's pure mind in that state is his Gnosis or Wisdom Body (*jñānakāya*). The two taken together, the Buddha's mind as what it is – a flow empty of intrinsic existence – is what this tradition calls the *dharmakāya*.[34]

Two important points follow from this dGe lugs account, which is clearly an attempt to render consistent the teachings of Prāsaṅgika Mādhyamika and those of the Tathāgatagarbha tradition. First, it is quite wrong to take literally the assertions made in some Tathāgatagarbha texts that all sentient beings are already enlightened. If that were true then there would be no need to practise the Buddhist religion. This also means that the *tathāgatagarbha* itself is strictly the fundamental cause of Buddhahood, and is in no way literally identical with the result, *dharmakāya* or Essence Body as the case may be, except in the sense that both defiled mind and Buddha's mind are empty of intrinsic existence. This also makes the second crucial point. The system of thought represented by the dGe lugs tradition is known in Tibet as *rang stong* (pronounced: rang dong) – literally 'self-empty' – which is to say that even the *dharmakāya*, and, of course, emptiness itself, are all empty of intrinsic existence. They are not 'truly established', there is absolutely no 'Absolute' anywhere at all in the sense of an ultimate really existing entity (mKhas grub rje 1968: 53). We have already seen that there is no such thing in Prāsaṅgika Mādhyamika thought.

The rival view in Tibet is known as *gzhan stong* (pronounced: zhen dong) – other-empty – and it has been particularly, although by no means exclusively, associated with the Jo nang pa school.[35] In the Jo nang tradition the *tathāgatagarbha* teachings appear to be taken quite literally. There is an ultimate reality, an Ultimate or Absolute, something which really intrinsically, inherently, exists. It is eternal, unchanging, an element which exists in all sentient beings and is the same, absolutely the same, in obscuration and enlightenment. All beings have within them the pure radiant nondual consciousness (or awareness/wisdom/gnosis – *jñāna*) of a fully-enlightened Buddha. This consciousness is obscured by adventitious defilements which do not really exist. In the obscured state this nondual consciousness is spoken of as the *tathāgatagarbha*; in enlightenment it is the *dharmakāya*, or the Essence Body, but in reality these are exactly the same thing, so that even unenlightened beings have within them the nondual consciousness of a Buddha, complete with the many remarkable qualities of a Buddha's consciousness. This tradition is known as *gzhan stong*, other-empty because, following the *Śrīmālā Sūtra*, it teaches that this Ultimate is empty of adventitious defilements and conventionalities which are intrinsically other than it, but is not empty of its own intrinsic existence and is also not empty of the Buddha qualities which are part of its own very nature.

The Jo nang pas referred to the *gzhan stong* doctrines as the Great Mādhyamika,[36] maintaining that these were not only the real teachings of Maitreya and Asaṅga (but superior to the common teachings of Yogācāra) but also the final teachings of Nāgārjuna and Āryadeva. It is generally granted that Nāgārjuna's works of philosophical reasoning such as the *Madhyamakakārikā* seem not to teach an intrinsically existing Ultimate (i.e. they are *rang stong*), but the Jo nang pas and others insisted that Nāgārjuna's explicit final teaching of an intrinsically existing Ultimate can be found in certain of his hymns, particularly the *Dharmadhātustava*. The self-empty teachings are said by the Jo nang pas to be correct as far as reasoning goes, as a lower teaching, clearing away erroneous views and cutting attachment to conventionalities that really simply do not exist at all. But one has eventually

to go beyond mere reasoning. When one goes beyond reasoning (particularly in direct nonconceptual meditative experience) there is realized something new, a real intrinsically existing Absolute beyond all conceptualization but accessible in spiritual intuition (in gnosis, *jñāna*) and otherwise available, as the Tathāgatagarbha texts stress, only to faith.

The differences between self-empty and other-empty teachings are deeply entrenched and were vigorously debated. From the self-empty point of view the other-empty approach, and the Jo nang pa school in particular, has all but ceased to be Buddhist since it takes literally a teaching which if taken completely literally according to its *prima-facie* assertions is tantamount to the Self doctrine of non-Buddhists.[37] For their dGe lugs opponents even if something which they claimed was an intrinsically existent Absolute were to be directly realized in their nonconceptual gnosis by followers of the *gzhan stong* position, how could that lead to final liberation? It does not touch the real root ignorance, which is failing to understand the true (empty) nature of phenomena. This has nothing to do with cognizing some other supposedly real thing called a *tathāgatagarbha*. Hence the Jo nang teachings and those like them certainly could not lead to final enlightenment. Western scholars too have in the past sometimes given the impression that the Jo nang school and its other-empty doctrine were a strange non-Buddhist aberration. This is, I think, misleading and rests on an essentialistic notion of what Buddhism 'really is'. There may conceivably have been direct or indirect 'Hindu' influences on the development of the other-empty doctrine, as indeed on the original Tathāgatagarbha teachings. Nevertheless, the Jo nang tradition appears to have done nothing more than taken literally certain doctrines which were almost certainly taken literally by some people in India and, as we shall see, were and are very widespread in East Asian Buddhism. Moreover within Tibet itself the other-empty doctrines have been widely accepted among non-dGe lugs scholars, and many contemporary teachers of the rNying ma (pronounced: Nying ma) and bKa' brgyud (pronounced: Ka gyer) schools in particular openly accept some form of other-empty teaching as the highest Buddhist doctrinal assertion. This has been very much the case since the growth of a tradition in early nineteenth-century non-dGe lugs Tibetan thought, still very influential, known as the *Ris med* (pronounced: Ri may) or Non-sectarian movement. This movement sought to diminish existing sectarian disputes and harmonize differences, often through emphasizing the Absolute Reality of *gzhan stong* as that which goes beyond reasoning and dispute, thus stressing the purely functional therapeutic role of Prāsaṅgika Mādhyamika reasoning and the superiority (of course) of the *Ratnagotravibhāga* as the text which reveals and invites faith in an all-pervading Buddha-nature.[38]

The *Dasheng qixinlun* (*Ta-sheng ch'i-hsin lun*) and the *Tathāgatagarbha* in East Asia

It is striking and indeed remarkable that so many of the principal 'Indian' sources for a study of East Asian Buddha-nature theory were almost certainly of Central Asian or Chinese composition. In particular the two most important exegetical treatises, the *Dasheng qixinlun*,

attributed to Aśvaghoṣa, and the *Foxinglun* (*Fo-hsing lun*), attributed to Vasubandhu, were almost undoubtedly composed in China, although not necessarily by Chinese. The *Foxinglun* (sometimes given the Sanskrit title of **Buddhagotra Śāstra*) was probably composed by its purported translator, Paramārtha.[39] The *Dasheng qixinlun* (**Mahāyānaśraddhotpāda Śāstra*) is usually referred to in English as the *Awakening of Faith in the Mahāyāna*.[40] According to Walter Liebenthal the *Awakening of Faith* was 'composed probably soon after 534 AD by a Confucian scholar who posed as a monk (?), and had assumed the clerical name Tao-ch'ung' (i.e. Daochong; Liebenthal 1961: 42; cf. Liebenthal 1959). Liebenthal's conclusions are controversial, however. More recently William H. Grosnick (1989) has argued that the *Awakening of Faith* was also written by Paramārtha himself, which would mean that it was indeed (in a sense) a work of Indian provenance. Hence doctrines in the *Awakening of Faith* that have previously been thought to have a rather 'un-Indian' flavour may still nevertheless reflect certain Indian Buddhist doctrinal tendencies (even if adapted to Chinese taste), perhaps towards a form of Yogācāra-Tathāgatagarbha syncretism. Either way there is now little doubt that the *Awakening of Faith* was originally composed in China and probably in the Chinese language.[41]

The *Awakening of Faith* sees the Tathāgatagarbha doctrine almost as a 'cosmological' theory, drawing attention to and stressing the Buddha-nature as an explanation of the true nature of the universe around us. This orientation rather characterizes Chinese discussions of the *tathāgatagarbha*. Generally in Indo-Tibetan Buddhism it was the specifically soteriological rather than the cosmologically-oriented dimension of the Buddha-nature theory that was stressed. The Buddha-nature is simply that within sentient beings which enables sentient beings to become enlightened.[42] For the *Awakening of Faith*, however, 'The principle is "the Mind of the sentient being." This Mind includes in itself all states of being of the phenomenal and the transcendental world.'[43] According to the commentator Fazang, this One Mind is the *tathāgatagarbha* (Hakeda 1967: 32). The *Awakening of Faith* itself takes the *tathāgatagarbha* as the substratum of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa (*ibid.*: 77–8). This Mind has two aspects – the Mind as Suchness or Thusness, that is, the Absolute Reality itself, and the Mind as phenomena. Between them these two aspects embrace all there is (*ibid.*: 31). Fazang again comments that Absolute and phenomena are not differentiated in essence, they include each other, for the One Mind is the essence of both (*ibid.*: 32). The essential nature of the Mind is unborn, imperishable, beyond language. Differentiation (i.e. phenomena) arises through illusion, fundamental ignorance of one's true nature (*ibid.*: 32–3; cf. p. 48). The Absolute Reality is empty, '[B]ecause from the beginning it has never been related to any defiled states of existence, it is free from all marks of individual distinction of things, and it has nothing to do with thoughts conceived by a deluded mind' (*ibid.*: 34). Nevertheless, to avoid misunderstandings, 'the true Mind is eternal, permanent, immutable, pure, and self-sufficient; therefore it is called "nonempty"' (*ibid.*: 35; cf. 76).

This is clearly a sort of cosmological version, or a cosmologically-flavoured version, of similar comments made in the *Śrīmālā Sūtra* and repeated in the *Ratnagotravibhāga*. Relating the preceding to the individual and liberation (the soteriological dimension) the

Awakening of Faith asserts: 'Consciousness has two aspects which embrace all states of existence and create all states of existence. They are: (1) the aspect of enlightenment, and (2) the aspect of nonenlightenment' (Hakeda 1967: 36–7). The aspect of enlightenment itself can also be divided into original enlightenment and the actualization of enlightenment. The first of these, original enlightenment, refers to the fact that Mind in itself, truly, is free from thoughts and all-pervading, analogous to empty space (*ibid.*: 37). It is also like a mirror which in itself is empty of images. The world appears in it as reflections, but it is actually undefiled and pure. It 'universally illumines the mind of man and induces him to cultivate his capacity for goodness' (*ibid.*: 42–3; cf. p. 48). This primevally-enlightened One Mind is referred to as the *dharmakāya* (*ibid.*: 37).[44] From the phenomenal point of view the fundamental delusion or ignorance is the result of (or identified with) mental agitation, like waves on a previously calm ocean (*ibid.*: 44–5):

> The Mind, though pure in its self nature from the beginning, is accompanied by ignorance. Being defiled by ignorance, a defiled (state of) Mind comes into being. But, though defiled, the Mind itself is eternal and immutable. Only the Enlightened Ones are able to understand what this means.
>
> (Hakeda 1967: 50)

There is a suggestion here that ignorance and hence bondage lie in mental activity itself:

> All thoughts, as soon as they are conjured up, are to be discarded, and even the thought of discarding them is to be put away . . . [thus one is to conform to the essential nature of Reality (*dharmatā*) through this practice of cessation].
>
> (*ibid.*: 96; material in parentheses taken from Fazang)[45]

Practice, for the *Awakening of Faith*, lies in being free of thoughts.[46] Through cutting discursive activity the mind is 'returned' to the state it was always really in, that of pure, mirror-like, radiant stillness. Since this is its own natural state it is thereby quite possible for enlightenment to occur not as the direct result of a long period of moral and spiritual cultivation but rather at any time, suddenly or apparently spontaneously (cf. Gregory 1983b: esp. 36 ff.).

It is interesting to compare the preceding with the Taoist *Huainanzi* (*Huai-nan-tzu*), which dates from perhaps the second century BCE. In Richard Wilhelm's paraphrase:

> [T]he essence of man is calm and pure in its original state, and only becomes cloudy and restless through contact with the objects that cause desires and emotions. . . . This original pure essence dwells in man. It will be temporarily covered, just as the clouds cover the stars . . . it is easy to foster this essence; since it is originally good and spoiled only by reacting to external influences, it is enough to remove the external causes and man will right himself all of his own accord.
>
> (Wilhelm 1985; 108–9)

The notion that the inherent nature of man is, as it were, something divine also harmonized splendidly with the Confucian emphasis on the innate goodness of man, while the

teaching that this world is in reality the Absolute suited the rather this-worldly orientation of Chinese culture, with its suspicion of monasticism. Chinese civilization was thus predisposed to the acceptance of a teaching wherein the sage discovers within himself a True Self which is also the real essence of the natural world, through learning to calm the mind, cut discursiveness, allowing it to rest in its own purity and goodness. There are precedents for all of this in Indian Buddhism, and in Tibet there are some parallels, but it is only in East Asian Buddhism that these tendencies become the mainstream Buddhist tradition.

There are no precedents, however, as far as I know, in Indo-Tibetan Buddhism for one of the conclusions drawn from combining the cosmological dimension of the all-pervading Buddha-nature with aversity to all forms of dualistic discrimination. In several Sino-Japanese traditions not only sentient beings but also the vegetable and mineral kingdoms are said to possess the *tathāgatagarbha*. Since possession of the *tathāgatagarbha* is what enables a being to attain enlightenment so the conclusion was drawn that even stones and blades of grass are to be saved, led to enlightenment (perhaps theologians might say 'redeemed') by the compassionate Bodhisattvas and Buddhas. Indeed, viewed from the ultimate perspective they are already saved, already enlightened.[47] In Japan the idea that fundamentally all things are one and radiantly pure and perfect, and to the enlightened mind that necessarily sees things as they are there is no substantial difference between things, was also used to suggest that the indigenous Japanese gods (*kami*) and the Buddhas are really one, thus providing a strategy for integrating Buddhism harmoniously and respectfully into Japanese society. The gods are really enlightened Buddhas, as are we all.[48]

In the Chinese school of Tiantai (T'ien-t'ai), on the other hand, we find another development built on the theory of the Buddha-nature that at first glance appears paradoxical and for which there is again no direct precedent in Indo-Tibetan thought. This is the theory of the inherent *evil* of the *tathāgatagarbha*. On the basis of an elaborate and sophisticated consideration of the doctrine of the Buddha-nature it was reasoned that really, from the finally true point of view, as seen by an enlightened mind, there can be no difference between ignorance and wisdom, the *dharmakāya* and suffering, being subject to karma and being free from karma or (as Nāgārjuna had already rather opaquely suggested) nirvāṇa and saṃsāra. Hence for an enlightened being, who sees things as they really are, morally-positively-valued things are equally morally-negatively-valued things, and vice versa. Thus it follows that the very Buddha-nature itself, if inherently good, is something inherently evil too. Really, the ultimate good and inherent evil are both completely identical. And it is the fact that the Buddha-nature is inherently evil, argues the great Tiantai master Zhiyi (Chih-i; 538–97), that enables the Buddha automatically to respond to the needs of suffering sentient beings by taking on where it might be necessary to do so (out of compassion) evil forms. Indeed (says Zhiyi) in acting a Buddha will give rise to evil, real evil, just as much as good since good and evil are inescapably part of all action: 'The devil-realm is precisely the Buddha-realm' (Ziporyn 2000: 257). But as a Buddha he sees things the way they really are, understands the true nature of things, and as master of the true situation he is thus untainted by the inevitable presence of evil.[49]

It is impossible to overestimate the importance of the Buddha-nature theory in general, and the *Awakening of Faith* in particular, for East Asian Buddhism. Among the earliest commentaries to the *Awakening of Faith* are treatises not only by Chinese but also Korean scholars (Wŏnhyo for example; see Lai 1985: 75 ff.), while in Japan prince Shōtoku Taishi (574–622), sometimes referred to as the 'father of Japanese Buddhism', is said to have written a commentary on the *Śrīmālā Sūtra*.[50] This should be contrasted with the almost complete absence of Indian commentaries on Tathāgatagarbha texts. The many references to Mind, One Mind, and True Self in East Asian Buddhism can to a substantial degree be traced directly or indirectly to this Buddha-nature and *Awakening of Faith* tradition, and the fact that a commentary on the *Awakening of Faith* in Chinese is spuriously attributed to Nāgārjuna has also meant that, rather as in the Tibetan *gzhan stong* traditions, Buddha-nature theory has sometimes been used in East Asia to interpret non-Tathāgatagarbha traditions, in this case Mādhyamika.[51] At the same time the importance of the *Awakening of Faith*, a Chinese creation, in East Asian Buddhism means that one must be careful not to use uncritically models of interpretation derived from Sino-Japanese Buddhism in understanding doctrines of Indian Buddhism (and, to a lesser extent, *vice versa*). The real point is that yet again one must be sensitive to the immense diversity within Mahāyāna Buddhism.

Dōgen on the Buddha-nature

Dōgen (1200–53) is sometimes (at least in recent years) considered to have been the greatest Japanese philosophical thinker as well as an important religious reformer. The early death of his parents when Dōgen was quite young gave him a vivid and intense awareness of impermanence which he found deeply troubling. As a young monk, dissatisfied with extant traditions of Japanese Buddhism, Dōgen travelled to China seeking the true understanding of Buddhism which, he felt, had been transmitted directly from Śākyamuni Buddha and handed down in an unbroken succession from teacher to pupil. On his return to Japan in 1227 Dōgen introduced the tradition of Caodong (Ts'ao-tung) Chan, known in Japan as Sōtō Zen.

The words *chan* and *zen* (together with the Korean name for the school, *sŏn*) all derive from the Sanskrit *dhyāna*, meaning simply 'meditation'.[52] According to one version of a relatively late tradition, Chan first arose when Śākyamuni Buddha held up a flower and winked. Only Mahākāśyapa understood, and smiled. In this wordless interchange of enlightened minds the Buddha's reputed successor Mahākāśyapa thus became for the developed Chan tradition in China and later in further East Asia its own first Patriarch, enabling the Chan/Zen tradition to link itself back through a series of patriarchs to Śākyamuni Buddha himself and the maximal authority that gave for the transmission of authentic Buddhist practice and hence enlightenment.[53] This story indicates the direct nature of much of Chan teaching, cutting straight through the trappings of discursive thought.

It is said that Chan was transmitted from India to China by the 28th Patriarch, Bodhidharma, in the late fifth century CE, although the historicity of Bodhidharma has been

doubted and many of the tales associated with him are certainly apocryphal. Attributed to Bodhidharma is a saying which characterizes the approach of Chan and also indicates a certain influence of Buddha-nature thought: 'Outside the Scriptures a special tradition; not depending on books and letters; pointing directly to the Mind of man; having seen the Essence one becomes a Buddha.'[54] In spite of the fact that Chan monks were often very learned and operated in an environment with a sophisticated understanding of Buddhist doctrine, in order to draw attention to the traps of conceptualization there has been rhetorically a strong aversion in some Chan and Zen traditions to the forms of traditional religion and the discursive fabrications of philosophical thought. This is combined with stories of apparently eccentric behaviour both in order to awaken others to their own True Nature and also as a reflection of the spontaneous unrestricted beneficial activity of the perfectly empty and clear Mind and hence of an enlightened person (cf. 'without-form' Yogācāra). An aversion to ritual and words, the eccentric Sage, an Outsider – these are common between Chan and Daoism, although they can be seen also in the sometimes iconoclastic activities attributed to the wandering tantric yogins or *siddhas* in later Indian Buddhist hagiography.

The well-known use of insoluble problems ('What is the sound of one hand clapping?') to break discursive thought, together with stories of sudden enlightenment occurring in strange contexts (as when the Master shut a pupil's leg in the gate) are largely characteristic not of Sōtō Zen but of the rival Rinzai (Chinese: Linji) Zen tradition. In Japan it was Rinzai Zen that was especially associated with the samurai and therefore the martial arts, and it is a form of or reading of Rinzai Zen which has become particularly well known in the West through the works of D. T. Suzuki.[55] In contrast, Dōgen established in Japan an austere form of Zen, his monasteries deep in the mountains, and Dōgen himself refused any compromise with secular authority.[56] Sōtō Zen is often said to have remained close to the soil and the people, reflected in a Japanese saying, 'Rinzai for the shōgun; Sōtō for the peasants'.[57] The practice of Dōgen's Zen is sustained *zazen* (or *shikantaza*) – sitting meditation.

Dōgen devoted an important section of his major work, the *Shōbōgenzō*, to the Buddha-nature, and his treatment of the topic was significant to his vision of the world and Zen practice within it. He starts from a section of the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra*, which Dōgen apparently reads (from the Chinese) in a rather idiosyncratic way as: 'All is sentient being, all beings are (all being is) the Buddha nature; Tathāgata is permanent, non-being, being and change'.[58] For Dōgen, therefore, it is not that all sentient beings *have* the Buddha-nature (or indeed *contain* a Tathāgata). Rather, the expression 'sentient being' refers to everything, and everything is the Buddha-nature, or the Tathāgata. It is dualistic to think of beings possessing the Buddha-nature. All beings, sentient and insentient, literally *are* the Buddha-nature. Dōgen says: 'Grass, trees, and lands are mind; thus they are sentient beings. Because they are sentient beings they are Buddha-nature. Sun, moon, and stars are mind; thus they are sentient beings; thus they are Buddha-nature' (*Shōbōgenzō*, trans. by Nishiyama in Dōgen Zenji 1983: IV, 134).[59]

One has to be careful to understand Dōgen correctly here, however. He is not saying, as appears to be so often the case in the *Awakening of Faith*, that from the point of view of the ultimate truth all is Mind and the world of phenomena does not exist, as reflections do not exist for the mirror itself.[60] The Buddha-nature is not an essence 'hidden' in things, behind them, as it were: '[F]lowers opening, leaves falling in themselves are substance of suchness. Nevertheless fools think that there can be no flower opening, no leaf falling in the realm of True Essence' (Masao 1971: 55). For Dōgen the world of phenomena really and quite literally is the Buddha-nature:

> The real aspect is all things. All things are this aspect, this character, this body, this mind, this world, this wind and this rain, this sequence of daily going, living, sitting, and lying down, this series of melancholy, joy, action, and inaction, this stick and wand, this Buddha's smile, this transmission and reception of the doctrine, this study and practice, this ever-green pine and ever unbreakable bamboo.
>
> (Nakamura 1964: 352)

Beings are already Buddhas; as Francis Cook has put it, 'the total being *just as it is* is Buddha'; Dōgen accordingly rejects any notion that the Buddha-nature is a seed (Cook 1983: 19–20). It is already the flower: This very world of impermanence is the Buddha-nature; 'Buddhism has never spoken of nirvana apart from birth-and-death' (Masao 1971: 63):

> Impermanence is the Buddhahood. . . . The impermanence of grass, trees, and forests is verily the Buddhahood. The impermanence of the person's body and mind is verily the Buddhahood. The impermanence of the (land) country and scenery is verily the Buddhahood.
>
> (Nakamura 1964: 352)

The 'divinity', as it were, of trees and mountains harmonized particularly well with Japanese Shintō belief that the natural world is full of spirits, while Dōgen's awareness of impermanence in nature also reflects the Japanese love of nature and sensitivity to its changing moods (as with the cherry blossom; see Nakamura 1964: 359).

Since we are already and quite literally enlightened, Dōgen seems to be open to Tsong kha pa's criticism of *gzhan stong* – that with such a teaching there can be no basis for any Buddhist practice. For Dōgen this appears to be true, if practice is seen as an activity motivated by a desire for a particular result to which it is directed. But Dōgen does not consider anyone should strive to become a Buddha. In reality (as the *Ratnagotravibhāga* said) there is nothing to be attained. Practice and enlightenment are the same thing:

> To think that practice and enlightenment are not identical is a non-Buddhist view. . . . Therefore, even though you are instructed to practice, do not think that there is any attainment outside of practice itself, because practice must be considered to point directly to intrinsic realization.
>
> (Cook 1983: 17)

Practice is itself the manifestation of an intrinsic realization. This is the correct way to interpret Dōgen's comment that '[a]lthough this Dharma (the Buddhist truth) is amply present in every person, unless one practices, it is not manifested; unless there is realization, it is not attained' (Masao 1971: 60). The attainment is a no-attainment. It is not the result of aiming at anything. Enlightenment for Dōgen is (as for all Buddhists) seeing things the way they really are. Since all things and all times are the Buddha-nature, Dōgen's enlightenment is seeing perfectly as it is the present moment 'a profound at-one-ness with the event at hand, in total openness to its wonder and perfection as manifesting absolute reality' (Cook 1983: 24–5). It is as simple as that.

A note on some contemporary issues: Critical Buddhism and a debate on not-Self in Thai Buddhism

Critical Buddhism

In recent decades a particularly lively controversy has raged in Japan over issues related to the *tathāgatagarbha* and its apparent contradiction to what is considered to be the definitive Buddhist teachings of not-Self and dependent origination. While this arises out of tensions between not-Self and the description of the *tathāgatagarbha* as some sort of immutable Self, it has focused also on the idea that all things are intrinsically or originally enlightened (Japanese: *hongaku shisō*), and what are alleged to be the unfortunate political and social implications of this in Japanese culture, such as a tendency to 'conformity'.[61] Because of the centrality of ideas associated with the *tathāgatagarbha* in East Asian Buddhism the Critical Buddhism (*hihan Bukkyō*) movement (led by academic scholars and specialists in Indian and Tibetan Buddhism such as Noriaki Hakamaya and Shirō Matsumoto from the Sōtō Zen-affiliated Komazawa University), critical of the whole *tathāgatagarbha* tradition and the doctrine of intrinsic enlightenment as contradicting basic Buddhist teachings of not-Self and dependent origination, is in fact an attack from within the Buddhist tradition itself on almost the whole of Japanese Buddhism, and with it a great deal of East Asian Buddhism as not really Buddhism at all.

Shirō Matsumoto argues (1986) that a fundamentally real eternal underlying basis of everything is a form of *dhātuvāda*, a term coined by Matsumoto that refers to a 'doctrine of or concerning a [true] realm or element' (as in the case of the Self (*ātman*), but also the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra*'s Buddha-nature, the *buddhadhātu*).[62] This idea is said to be contrary to the Buddha's teaching concerning the causally-related nature of things, a truth that he discovered in his enlightenment experience. The *tathāgatagarbha* is *dhātuvāda*, and is hence an example of the very thing the Buddha set out to criticize and deny. For Matsumoto the teaching of the *tathāgatagarbha* is effectively a form of Buddhist heresy. Socially and politically if one holds that all things are truly equal and really the same then this itself leads to a form of discrimination against the disadvantaged through accepting the status quo and the injustice that this involves. Matsumoto's colleague and

collaborator Noriaki Hakamaya argues that any sense of Self entails that one cannot act selflessly. Hence the whole doctrine of the *tathāgatagarbha* is contrary to the imperative of selfless action that is central to Buddhism. In a later study Matsumoto relates this *dhātuvāda* that is the *tathāgatagarbha* to a perennial and rather primitive way of thinking ('all things arise from and return to the One'), and links it conceptually to the Japanese folk religion. Elsewhere Matsumoto argues that other ideas that he sees as intimately related to the *tathāgatagarbha* and the notion of original enlightenment, such as going beyond all thoughts and conceptualization, or not relying on words – ideas that are central to common ways of presenting and understanding Zen – are not really Buddhist virtues at all. Noriaki Hakamaya has argued that Zen is not Buddhism, the famous doctrine of nonduality found in the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa Sūtra* is not Buddhism, and he has expressed the intention of showing that Yogācāra is not Buddhism either.[63]

While noting the existence of the Critical Buddhism movement, this is certainly not the place to enter into an assessment of it.[64] Clearly, in the Tathāgatagarbha tradition we have texts and practices that (in spite of occasional detractors) are widely considered to be Buddhist, and have been considered to be Buddhist by their adherents in large numbers throughout history. These texts, traditions and practices can be traced historically as evolutions at different times and places out of other texts, traditions and practices that can similarly be traced back to the time of the Buddha himself. All evolution and developments – while sometimes rejected by other Buddhists – were as far as we know undertaken in good faith by those who considered themselves to be Buddhists acting in accordance with the intention of the Buddha (or *a* Buddha) as they understood it. The scholar standing *qua* critical academic scholar outside the Buddhist tradition, while noting that one group within Buddhism may reject certain developments as inauthentic, has to accept all these developments as authentically Buddhist in accordance with their adherents' claim of religious affiliation. After all, in the history of Buddhism the *tathāgatagarbha* teachings have usually been accepted within Mahāyāna Buddhism as in one way or another (perhaps when subject to appropriate interpretation) legitimate developments of it.

Since Wittgenstein's theory of 'family resemblances' we are now much more sensitive to the idea that while *B* may be a legitimate development out of *A*, and have some things in common with that, and C may be a legitimate development out of *B*, and have some things in common with that, and so forth until we reach *Z* as a legitimate development out of *Y*, also with some things in common with it, *Z* may have little or nothing in common with *A* and may in some or indeed many ways be the exact opposite of it. Adherents to *A* may on that basis completely reject *Z* as inauthentic and alien. And, as insiders, *qua* adherents of *A* rejecting *Z* and quite possibly rejecting *F* or *L* too (or even *B*), they have every right to do so. Adherents of *Z* may then argue that there are ways of interpreting their position that entails they are not so different from *A* after all, and they are hence all members of the same group or family (in this case, of Buddhism, as in the case of *rang stong* ways of reading the *tathāgatagarbha* in Tibet). Takasaki has pointed out against the Critical

Buddhism enthusiasts that the *tathāgatagarbha* sources were themselves aware of the criticism that they simply taught an *ātman* in the same way that non-Buddhists did, and they rejected this accusation and defended themselves against the charge.[65] Alternatively, adherents of *Z* may argue that theirs is the finally true teaching, for which *A* is merely preparatory (as in the case of *gzhan stong* ways of reading the *tathāgatagarbha* in Tibet). But as scholars we simply note these disputes and strategies occurring within groups each of which claim in good faith to be truly Buddhist. And we accept in this respect their self-definition.

The approach of this book is to argue that if we take Mahāyāna as a whole we find a vast range of texts, traditions and practices where, taken together in the light of their historical and geographical extension, there appears to be very little common core. This is the more so if we speak of Buddhism as such, rather than simply Mahāyāna.[66] It seems to me that where someone wishes to argue (as in the case of the Critical Buddhism movement) that a development within Buddhism (in terms of its own self-understanding) is not really Buddhist at all, that person or group is working with an intentionally and rhetorically restricted definition of 'Buddhism'. This restricted definition entails that in the eyes of those propounding the new definition texts, traditions and practices that fall outside it *should not count* as being Buddhist. Rather than a descriptive claim, it is prescriptive in intent.

Thus the claim is not that texts, traditions and practices that consider themselves to be Buddhist are not Buddhist *by their own self-understanding*. Clearly they are. The claim is rather that they are not Buddhist by the definition of Buddhism *employed by those rejecting them*.[67] This must necessarily be a different and more restrictive definition of Buddhism. Thus Matsumoto, Hakamaya *et al.* consider that the Tathāgatagarbha tradition in East Asia is not really Buddhism because it appears to contradict a definition of Buddhism (their definition of Buddhism) that is based on, e.g., their understanding of the Buddha's original enlightenment experience as expressed in certain texts and doctrines. In this experience the Buddha discovered the absolute centrality of dependent origination and not-Self. This is what he taught and (it is argued) he rejected all forms of unchanging Absolute. What is in keeping with this alone can be called Buddhism.[68] Hence the supporters of Critical Buddhism combine the position of outsiders engaging in critical scholarship on early Buddhist textual sources in India with the approach of insiders adopting a legislative approach to what is to count as *real* Buddhism.[69] What is not supported by our knowledge of the doctrinal orientation of early Indian Buddhism, based on textual research, or directly compatible with it or derivable from it, is not real Buddhism.[70]

We can note here the existence of the Critical Buddhism movement as itself a dimension of contemporary Mahāyāna Buddhism among scholars in Japan. In their rejection of the Tathāgatagarbha tradition on the basis that it is incompatible with not-Self and dependent origination, or with the Mādhyamika idea of emptiness, they are not completely alone in the history of Buddhism. One issue is how legislative the teachings of not-Self and dependent origination, or the Mādhyamika idea of emptiness, are for Buddhist identity.[71] Clearly, from the point of view of a description of Buddhist doctrinal history, as Buddhism

has existed in history, these doctrines cannot be. At least some ways of understanding the *tathāgatagarbha* contravene the teachings of not-Self, or the Mādhyamika idea of emptiness. And these ways of understanding the *tathāgatagarbha* were and are widespread in Mahāyāna Buddhism. Yet by their own self-definition they are Buddhist. But even if, e.g., the teachings of not-Self *are* to be taken as legislative, there is another issue of whether the doctrine of the *tathāgatagarbha* can be so interpreted from within the tradition that it is or becomes compatible with these legislative doctrines. These are themselves issues that Buddhists have wrestled with and debated at length. They are problems for insiders, members of the Buddhist tradition(s). While noting and describing what they have said, *qua* outsiders we do not ourselves have to follow their interpretive stipulations here.

Not-Self in contemporary Thai Buddhism

Given the legislative claim of the centrality of the not-Self doctrine for Buddhist identity among the adherents of Critical Buddhism in Japan, the controversy over not-Self in contemporary Thai Buddhism is perhaps rather surprising.[72] This is all the more so because, although prior to the thirteenth century there may have been Mahāyāna influences in Thailand, in recent centuries Thai Buddhism has been Theravāda, and it is the common Theravāda claim that it (and, usually, it alone) represents simply and unadulterated the original Buddhism of the Buddha.[73] Hence we might not expect to find adherents to the doctrine of the Self, and denial of the universality of not-Self as definitive of Buddhist identity, among distinguished Thai Buddhists, including not just scholars but leading figures in the national Saṃgha and also important meditation masters.

The dispute in Thailand centres on a claim by some prominent Thai Theravāda Buddhists that *nibbāna* (nirvāṇa) is indeed the true Self (*ātman*; Pali: *attā*). Hence there does indeed exist a true Self, and it is realized in enlightenment. This is opposed by other Thai Buddhists who argue, in common with the way Buddhism is usually represented in Western scholarly sources, that Buddhism teaches that there is simply no Self at all, and nirvāṇa can certainly not be thought of as the true Self. There is no such thing as a true Self. This dispute apparently dates back in modern Thai Buddhism at least as far as 1939, although it reached particular intensity in the late 1990s. Those who argue for a true Self suggest that the Buddha's teaching of not-Self was intended to encourage the discovery for themselves by his disciples of the true Self by showing what is not the Self. Hence the teaching of not-Self is a stripping away, undertaken also in meditation and revealing the real Self when all that is not Self is removed.[74]

In 1939 the then *Saṃgharāja*, head of the state-supported hierarchical national Saṃgha structure, published a book of essays by many contributors including some sermons of his own in which he argued that nirvāṇa is the true Self. The opposite position was put forward in the same year in a short book by the famous Thai monk Buddhadāsa.[75] A newspaper invited people to send in their views on whether nirvāṇa is Self or not-Self (Cholvijarn 2007: 4). Buddhadāsa argued (in common with, e.g., the Critical Buddhism move-

ment) that the not-Self perspective is what is uniquely characteristic of or definitive of Buddhism. There can be no enlightenment so long as someone holds to a Self. Clearly the *Saṃgharāja* at that time, and (while no doubt a minority) many other Thai Buddhists to the present day, do not agree.[76] The *Saṃgharāja*'s argument is summarized very clearly by Cholvijarn (2007: 11):

> [T]he uniqueness of the Buddhist doctrine of *anattā* [not-Self] is realised once *attā* [the Self] has been attained. The Buddha discovered that *nibbāna* is *attā* and only by doing so, was able to say that the five aggregates are *anattā*. The *anattā* doctrine of the Buddha is the doctrine of only Buddhism because the Buddha realised *attā* that is different from conditioned *dhammas*. *Nibbāna* is the purity of an object, it is void of defilements [cf. the *tathāgatagarbha*] and once it is reached there is no more clinging. As purity, it must [be] situate[d] within an object. That object is self. *Anattā* is a tool that the Buddha uses for [his] disciples to reject the conditioned *dhamma* and to accept *nibbāna*. If *nibbāna* is *anattā*, then, *nibbāna* is to be rejected and there would be no purpose in practising the Noble Eightfold Path.

Echoing our *tathāgatagarbha* sources, the *Saṃgharāja* argues that while the Buddha says that the conditioned is worldly (i.e. *laukika*), evil, impermanent and leads to death, the unconditioned is supramundane (*lokottara*), good, permanent and undying. The former must be rejected; the latter accepted. If there were no Self to be accepted, there could be no not-Self to be rejected. Again, in common with *tathāgatagarbha* texts (and perhaps significant culturally), the *Saṃgharāja* makes a great deal of the *purity* of nirvāṇa. Since nirvāṇa is pure, there must be something there actually to be pure (we might say, something in which purity inheres). That is the *attā*, the Self. It is also the mind, but a mind purified of all conditioned *dhammas*. It is hence an unconditioned mind or consciousness, i.e. 'Mind'.[77] The *Saṃgharāja* states that he agrees with other Buddhists that 'Self' is conventional and a concept. But it is not the conventional concept that he is speaking of here, but its referent, i.e. the actual Self that really exists and is nirvāṇa. To abandon the designation is not to abandon its referent (*ibid*.: 13).

Fifteen years after this dispute a prominent Thai meditation master (particularly famous, as indeed was the *Saṃgharāja*, for his miraculous amulets) also put forward the view that nirvāṇa is the true Self (Cholvijarn 2007: 16 ff.). This master is associated with the discovery (or, it is said by his supporters, rediscovery) of the Dhammakāya meditation techniques, practices that have since been spread by the contemporary and extremely successful Dhammakāya movement. These meditations involve the realization, when the mind reaches its purest state, of an unconditioned 'Dhamma body' (*dhammakāya*) in the form of a luminous, radiant and clear Buddha figure free of all defilements and situated within the body of the meditator.[78] Nirvāṇa is the true Self, and this is also the *dhammakāya*. In more recent years the defence of the not-Self interpretation of Buddhism, particularly against the Dhammakāya movement, has been taken up notably in 1994 (and subsequent publications) by the distinguished Thai Buddhist scholar P. A. Payutto (Phra Dhammapiṭaka).[79] In 1995

Phra Rajyanvisith responded from the point of view of the Dhammakāya movement and the perspective of nirvāṇa as the true Self. Especially interesting is Phra Rajyanvisith's argument that nirvāṇa as the true Self is understood particularly by practitioners of meditation. Scholars who are not themselves advanced meditation practitioners ('scholars who do not practise') are often defective in this respect. Hence they incline towards a not-Self perspective. But only scholars hold that view. By way of contrast, Phra Rajyanvisith mentions in particular the realizations of several distinguished forest hermit monks.[80] Moreover, he argues, impermanence, suffering and not-Self go together. Anything which is not-Self is hence also impermanent and suffering. But, it is argued, nirvāṇa is not suffering, nor is it impermanent. It is not possible to have something which is permanent, not suffering (i.e. is happiness) and yet for it still to be not-Self. Hence it is not not-Self either. It is thus [true, or transcendental] Self.[81]

These, and other arguments for and against nirvāṇa as the true Self in later books published in Thailand, are detailed at length in Cholvijarn 2007. We do not need to follow them here.[82] I have said enough, I think, to indicate the direction of thinking of those Thai Theravādins who hold to the existence of a true Self, and also to suggest their obvious similarities with the *tathāgatagarbha* in Mahāyāna sources. Although one should always be cautious about projecting into remote history and different cultures contemporary events, further investigation of the Thai material may give some clues to ways of thinking and also of experiencing Buddhism that contributed to the evolution of the Tathāgatagarbha doctrines. Of course, the point here is not which is right as an interpretation of the intentions of the Buddha or different phases of Buddhist doctrinal history. The point, rather, is simply that there are now and have been in history Buddhists who in good faith accept some sort of teaching of the Self and argue that a true Self was the ultimate purport of Buddhist teaching. Any scholarly account of Buddhist doctrine as it has existed in history in its totality has to accept diversity on the issue, even if it is true that the not-Self advocates appear to have been in the overwhelming majority.

We should be clear that those Thai scholars and meditators who argue for nirvāṇa as the true Self do not consider it to be in any way a Mahāyāna doctrine that they are adopting, and they reject completely the notion of Mahāyāna influence. As modern Theravādins they see themselves as having nothing to do with Mahāyāna ideas although, as we have seen, historically in ancient India there would have been nothing to prevent Mahāyāna ideas from developing within a Theravāda sectarian context among others. In the Thai case the true Self is held to be the actual teaching of the Buddha, the final purport of the not-Self doctrine, comprehended through both a proper understanding of the Pali canonical texts, the result of detailed textual analysis and argument, and also through meditative experience. It allows the hypothesis that throughout the history of Buddhism there might have been groups of monks who argued for such a view of the Self or one similar to it. Sometimes these monks wrote treatises (*śāstras*) defending their understanding, sometimes perhaps they wrote sūtras (possibly expressing private revelations in dreams or meditation). At other times they simply kept their understanding to themselves, or confided it to a few friends and

disciples. Sometimes they persuaded others (as, perhaps, with the Pudgalavādins), sometimes not. Sometimes, for one reason or another, their writings and influence survived; more often probably not. Perhaps these views found a more welcome home, support, and hence preservation in a Mahāyāna environment, particularly where they could depend on Mahāyāna sūtras deemed by the wider mainstream Buddhist community apocryphal and possibly also a certain sort of doctrinal anarchy that might sometimes have accompanied those sūtras where they flourished. These ways of reading Buddhism in terms of a true Self certainly seem to have been congenial in the East Asian environment, and hence flourished in that context where for complex reasons Mahāyāna too found a ready home.

These are suggestions. We simply do not know. But short of evidence of direct influence of *tathāgatagarbha* thought on recent Thai Buddhism, or subtle influence perhaps through, e.g., so-called 'tantric Theravāda' in Thailand, the similarities in thinking between some aspects of the Tathāgatagarbha tradition and the Thai Self-advocates suggest ways of responding to the Buddhist intellectual and spiritual heritage that presumably developed independently but with what would seem to be remarkably similar results. And it also suggests that we should abandon any simplistic identification of Buddhism with a straightforward not-Self definition, and any automatic reading of *tathāgatagarbha* sources behind their surface utterance in order to bring them into line with not-Self or Mādhyamika doctrines. The idea that *of course* the *tathāgatagarbha* sources cannot really mean what they say because that would contravene the not-Self doctrine, and hence not be Buddhist – and therefore we have to read them very carefully to find out what they *intended* to say and perhaps to understand why they were expressed in such an ambiguous or misleading way – involves a restricted and prescriptive narrowing of what historically has been Buddhism as it has existed over many centuries and wide geographical dispersion.

6 Huayan – the Flower Garland tradition

Buddhism in China

In the previous chapter I mentioned the commentator to the *Awakening of Faith*, Fazang. Fazang was, according to traditional reckoning, the third patriarch of the school known in China as *Huayan*, in Korea as *Hwaŏm*, and in Japan as *Kegon*.[1] The expression 'Huayan' means 'Flower Garland', and is the Chinese name of a Mahāyāna sūtra, the vast *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*.[2] One feature of East Asian, in contrast to Indo-Tibetan, Buddhism was the development of schools often based on the study of particular sūtras. Each such school saw its scripture as the culmination of the Buddha's teaching, his highest utterance or final word, the sūtras of the other schools ranked in a step-like progression to this highest expression of the Buddha's doctrine. It was in these schools, such as Huayan and Tiantai (with its interest in the *Lotus Sūtra*), that a truly Chinese version of Buddhist philosophy was created. This East Asian emphasis on sūtras contrasts with the Tibetan attitude, for example, where it was (and is) felt that sūtras are too difficult to understand – poetic, vague, unsystematic, or superficially contradictory, perhaps – without approaching them through a thorough grounding in Mādhyamika and Yogācāra philosophy. In the great Chinese schools philosophy arises out of reading the sūtras; in Tibet Indian schools of philosophy, thoroughly mastered and schematized, are used as hermeneutic tools in order to understand the sūtras themselves. Perhaps one reason for this Chinese emphasis on sūtras and their exegesis was that study of the Original Master's utterances and commentary on their meaning was very much part of traditional Confucian learning.

There is a tendency sometimes to compartmentalize Indian and Chinese civilizations, to see the great geographical barriers of the Himalayas and Burmese jungles as for ever separating the two cultures, rendering contact and cultural diffusion a spasmodic and fragmentary enterprise. Historically this picture is quite false. Indian and Chinese civilizations met in Central Asia, and Buddhism spread to China through the passes of Kashmir and Afghanistan along well-trodden trade routes. To the north-west from the Ganges plain the route runs to Shrinagar, thence to Leh in Ladakh, and over the Karakorams to Yarkand, on the edge of the treacherous Takla Makan desert. Trade routes run south and north of the Takla Makan, joining at Kashgar in the west and Dunhuang (Tun-huang) in the east.

Yarkand is on the southern route, as also is Khotan. On the northern route are Kucha and Turfan. All of these were major centres of trade and cultural diffusion on the Silk Road, running from the Chinese capital of Chang'an westwards eventually to reach the Mediterranean coastal ports of Antioch and Tyre. In the wake of Alexander the Great's incursions into north-west India (fourth century BCE) Greek kingdoms were established in Bactria, north of modern Afghanistan, and Greek kings periodically invaded the Ganges valley. At least one Indo-Greek monarch, Milinda (Menandros), is reputed in Buddhist sources to have become a Buddhist monk and died an Arhat. The earliest portrayal of the Buddha figure in Indian art was arguably sometime during the first century CE in the Gandhāra region (modern Afghanistan/Pakistan/Kashmir) under a strong Hellenistic influence.[3]

By the end of the first century BCE the Greeks had been ousted from Bactria and north-west India by various Iranian tribes. From the late first century CE the Kuṣāṇa empire, centred in Bactria, took in the whole of north India as well as large areas of western Central Asia. The Kuṣāṇas were enthusiastic Buddhists. There still remain a number of bone relics enclosed within beautiful reliquaries excavated from Kuṣāṇa stūpas. The presence of one empire from the Ganges valley to the Silk Road undoubtedly contributed immensely to the dissemination of Buddhism, perhaps spread or at least encouraged by travelling laymen, particularly merchants, and certainly spread by peripatetic monks.[4] This expansion of Buddhism may have had a civilizing, as well as possibly a pacifying, effect. It no doubt received active support and patronage from the Kuṣāṇa aristocracy and royal house. At the same time in China the Eastern or Later Han dynasty (25–220 CE) held sway over most of China and the eastern end of the Silk Road. Thus Indian and Chinese cultures were in direct contact, and it was through the rich Sino-Indian mercantile communities of Central Asia that Buddhism spread to China. It seems that the earliest surviving evidence for Buddhism in China dates from 65 CE.[5] With the collapse of the Kuṣāṇa and Later Han, oasis centres such as Khotan and Kashgar became independent states where for hundreds of years Buddhism ideologically unified Iranian, Indian, and Chinese civilizations.

Of course, many things reached China via the Silk Road (barbarian invaders and disease among them) without thereby becoming Chinese. The Chinese tended to be intensely xenophobic, and a foreign religion, and barbarians in strange garb, could at the most be curious. In addition, the Confucian Chinese found certain aspects of Buddhism, such as celibate monasticism, morally and socially repellent. Monks who renounced the world might fail to pay proper respect to their ancestors, either through appropriate rituals or through begetting sons to continue the family lineage (see, e.g., Gregory 1991: 106–7). The very notion of rebirth appeared to put respect for ancestors into question. What were seen as the world-negating and economically unproductive dimensions of Buddhism contrasted noticeably with a Chinese emphasis on the world of the senses and correct political-cum-social relationships. A claimed independence of the monastic order from political authority was felt to be a serious threat to political order. During a suppression of Buddhism in the years 574–7, the emperor declared in an edict that 'Buddhism must be suppressed because it practiced unfilial conduct, wasted wealth, and instigated rebellion' (Pas 1987: 73). And

why should loyal Heaven-fearing Chinese follow strange Indian customs? After all, there was no mention of the Buddha in the ancient Chinese classics.

There were periodic persecutions of Buddhism throughout the first thousand years of Chinese Buddhist history. As late as the Tang dynasty, probably the high point of Chinese Buddhism, some years after Fazang, Han Yu (768–824), disgusted that the Emperor Xianzong (Hsien-tsung; reigned 805–20), Son of Heaven, should have paid respect to a relic of the Buddha, like a good Confucian even at the risk of his own life petitioned Xianzong in his famous *Memorial on the Bone of the Buddha*. Among its many faults Buddhism, he alleged, has no real magic power. At least, it does not confer longevity, which was a principal concern of the pragmatic Chinese. What is the point of weird religious rites if they do not confer longevity? The sages of old, prior to the arrival of Buddhism, lived for ages. When Buddhism arrived during the Later Han dynasty the lives of the emperors and their dynasties grew shorter. This much was true. Buddhism remained a foreign religion in China until the collapse of the Later Han dynasty. It was in the spiritual vacuum created by the Period of Disunity (221–589), short lives and short reigns, that Buddhism really began to influence the cultured elite who alone, through their internalization of the foreign religion, could render it truly Chinese. In times of disunity and political fragmentation the Chinese turned to individualism and retreat, characteristically Daoist virtues, and attempted to live in harmony with the Source of Things and if necessary alone. It was under the wing of religious tendencies associated with Daoism that Buddhism began to gain a foothold in intellectual circles. The cultured elite at this time were interested particularly in Buddhist meditation. Buddhist ideas were sometimes explained in terms of indigenous Chinese concepts, and faced with apparent similarities it was suggested that the Daoist Laozi (Lao-tzu) might have travelled to India, either becoming or teaching the Buddha. The first phase of Chinese enthusiasm for Buddhism and intellectual absorption of it inclined towards what might be thought of as a type of Buddho–Daoist synthesis.[6]

'I stand in awe of supernatural beings,' said Confucius, 'but keep them at a distance.' For Han Yu the spectacle of an emperor worshipping a bone was an 'absurd pantomime':

> The Buddha was born a barbarian; he was unacquainted with the language of the Middle Kingdom, and his dress was of a different cut. His tongue did not speak nor was his body clothed in the manner prescribed by kings of old; he knew nothing of the duty of minister to prince or the relationship of son to father. . . . There is . . . all the less reason now that he has been dead so long for allowing this decayed and rotten bone, this filthy and disgusting relic to enter the Forbidden Palace. . . . I beg that this bone be handed over to the authorities to throw into water or fire, that Buddhism be destroyed root and branch for ever.[7]

Han Yu's influential friends deflected the fury of the Son of Heaven, and his punishment was commuted to banishment, or, if you prefer, he became a governor far away in the south, an area infested with crocodiles.[8]

Buddhism in China was spread during its first thousand years through the influence of translator-missionaries from India and Sino-Indian Central Asia such as Lokakṣema (active 147–86), the great Kumārajīva, and Paramārtha, as well as by Chinese such as Faxian (*c*. 337–*c*. 418), Xuanzang, and Yijing (635–713) who undertook the hazardous journey to India by land or sea in order to obtain scriptures for China. Sometimes these journeys were taken with imperial patronage, and further land grants and patronage of temple building meant that as time passed so Chinese Buddhist monasteries tended to gain in power and temporal prestige. In spite of this (or partly, perhaps, because of it) the monasteries and monks were closely supervised by the government, always suspicious of foreign customs which remained for ever strange. Chinese monks for their part, after initial protest, undertook such un-Indian practices as prostrating to the emperor. Always in the background was the rivalry and opposition of Confucians and the growing Daoist church. Major persecutions occurred in 446, 574, and, in particular, 842–5. During this last persecution 260,500 fully-ordained monks and nuns were forcibly returned to lay life.

The Period of Disunity ended with the triumph of the Sui (581–618) and then the Tang dynasties. Once more Chinese imperial control spread into Central Asia, where it eventually met the forces of Islam. At the Battle of the Talas River (751), in what is now Russian Turkestan, the Tang army was decisively defeated by the Arabs. Although scholars still debate the exact importance of the battle itself, the days of Buddhism in western Central Asia were numbered. Within China itself under the Tang we see extensive state patronage, large monasteries, and a vast Buddhist literature of translated and indigenous works. The tenets of Buddhism had been more or less disentangled from indigenous concepts associated with Daoism. Tang Buddhist doctrine shows a move from introduction to absorption and creative internalization. Among the predominantly practice-oriented Buddhist traditions which become progressively more important as time passes, particularly after the 842–5 persecution, we find Chan (Zen) on the one hand, with its stress on meditation verging sometimes on an antinomian anti-intellectualism, and deep devotion to a Buddha, particularly Amitābha, on the other. In the great Tang philosophical synthesis of Huayan we find, in the words of Wing-tsit Chan, 'the highest development of Chinese Buddhist thought . . . [which] with the philosophy of T'ien-t'ai [Tiantai], forms the metaphysical basis of Chinese Buddhism in the last millennium' (Chan 1963: 406).

The *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*

The *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* is much longer than the Bible, and a single title is apt to give a misleading impression of unity. In fact the sūtra as it stands is a heterogeneous work, a collection of texts some of which certainly circulated separately. Other parts were probably composed at the time of compilation in order to fill obvious gaps in the composite text. Only two sections survive in their entirety in Sanskrit, both of which were without doubt originally separate texts – the *Daśabhūmika Sūtra* on the 10 stages of the Bodhisattva's path to enlightenment, and what is now the climax of the *Avataṃsaka*, the *Gaṇḍavyūha Sūtra*.

The *Daśabhūmika Sūtra* itself was first translated into Chinese during the third century CE. A comprehensive translation of the *Avataṃsaka* into Chinese was made by Bodhibhadra in 418–21, and a further complete translation was made by the Khotanese monk Śikṣānanda during the closing years of the seventh century.[9] The Śikṣānanda translation is some 10 per cent longer than that by Bodhibhadra, which serves to remind us that the Mahāyāna sūtras in classical times were not fixed but underwent revision, expansion, and sometimes contraction. Consequently we should be wary of referring to a sūtra recension as *the* sūtra.

The original texts translated as the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* were brought to China from Khotan, in Central Asia.[10] The texts refer to China and Kashgar, so it is likely that compilation and even authorship of at least some portions of the comprehensive work took place within the Indic cultural sphere of Central Asia, perhaps in Khotan itself. The *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* sets out to portray the cosmos as it is seen by a Buddha or very advanced Bodhisattvas. As such it is not a systematically philosophical sūtra, although there are sections which are philosophically stimulating. Luis Gómez has referred to the teaching of its climax, the *Gaṇḍavyūha Sūtra*, as one of 'speculative mysticism' (Gómez 1967: lxxviii). Whereas the Buddhist philosophical schools portray a certain rivalry between Mādhyamika and Yogācāra the *Gaṇḍavyūha* speaks both of all things lacking intrinsic existence and a pure untainted awareness or consciousness (*amalacitta*) as the ground of all phenomena:

> Endless action arises from the mind; from action (arises) the multifarious world. Having understood that the world's true nature is mind, you display bodies of your own in harmony with the world. Having realized that this world is like a dream, and that all Buddhas are like mere reflections, that all principles [*dharma*] are like an echo, you move unimpeded in the world.
>
> (Gómez 1967: lxxxi)

Because all things lack intrinsic existence so the Bodhisattva's mind can, through meditation, 'pervade' or 'enter into' all things and he or she can move 'unimpededly'. The *Gaṇḍavyūha* views the world not from the point of view of ontology but from inside the Buddha's – or an advanced Bodhisattva's – experience. As such, the world of the *Gaṇḍavyūha* is one of magic and the visionary (Beyer 1977). It is a world where things happen at a distance through working on one's own mind simply because things lack intrinsic existence and therefore (it is urged) lack concrete difference. Or, put another way (a way which may be philosophically different, but is not different for the sūtra), things happen at a distance according to the Bodhisattva's will, or he can pass through walls, because there is no real distance, no mural hardness, since all is a continuum of consciousness. This is experienced through meditation. The world of the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*, the world of the Buddha, is a world of vision, of magic, of miracle. George J. Tanabe, Jr has said of the *Avataṃsaka* (1992: 11):

> [It is] known mostly for a great deal of abstruse dogmatics; but it must also be remembered . . . that it is primarily an account of fabulous visions backed by an ancient legacy

> of visions going back to Śākyamuni himself. The [*Avataṃsaka Sūtra*], however, is not a report of undigested visions, but a sophisticated work that blends fantastic visions with interpretive discussions about them. This complex weaving of doctrine and fantasy, a characteristic of sutras, results in a visionary statement that comes with the beginnings of its own code for interpretation.

As a result of meditative absorption the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas have the power, a magical power, to manifest things or to create. The motive for their acts of magical creation is great compassion. Through visualization the mind generates an image. If all is lacking in intrinsic existence, all is held to be dream-like or akin to an illusion. Moreover if (as Buddhists have always believed) all follows the mind – as the mind is so is the world – one might infer that the images created in meditation by the Buddhas will have as much reality as anything else (Gómez 1967: lxxix; cf. lxxxv). If all lacks intrinsic existence, or all is Mind, then not only are these images, these magical interventions, as real as anything else, but also, as mind, or lacking in intrinsic existence, they reveal the true nature of things as much as anything else. Since the Buddha uses his magical interventions, his transformations, solely for the benefit of sentient beings, their use will reveal the true nature of things *more* openly, more revealingly, than other things. In the world as seen by the Buddhas 'fictions' become 'reality' and 'reality' becomes 'fiction'.[11]

What is the world of the Buddha? Who, for that matter, *is* the Buddha? The Buddha of the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* is not primarily Śākyamuni, at least when he is understood as the so-called historical Buddha who lived and died in India. That Buddha was indeed in reality nothing more than a transformation, a magical intervention, by the actual Buddha. In general we find that the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*'s Buddha, the actual Buddha, is Vairocana, or Mahāvairocana, the Great Illumination Buddha.[12] He does not teach in the sūtra, but approves of teachings given by his vast retinue of advanced Bodhisattvas. Vairocana is just unutterably amazing:

> The realm of the Buddhas is inconceivable;
> No sentient being can fathom it. . . .
> The Buddha constantly emits great beams of light;
> In each light beam are innumerable Buddhas. . . .
> The Buddha-body is pure and always tranquil;
> The radiance of its light extends throughout the world; . . .
> The Buddha's freedom cannot be measured –
> It fills the cosmos and all space. . . .
> The Buddha body responds to all – none do not see it.
> With various techniques it teaches the living,
> Sound like thunder, showering the rain of truth. . . .
> All virtuous activities in the world
> Come from the Buddha's light. . . .
>
> (Cleary 1984–7: I, Bk 1)

His deeds, his magical interventions, are equally vast and astonishing:

> In all atoms of all lands
> Buddha enters, each and every one,
> Producing miracle displays for sentient beings:
> Such is the way of Vairocana. . . .
> The techniques of the Buddhas are inconceivable,
> All appearing in accord with beings' minds. . . .
> In each atom the Buddhas of all times
> Appear, according to inclinations;
> While their essential nature neither comes nor goes,
> By their vow power they pervade the worlds.
> (*ibid*.: I, Bk 4)

We have here, I think, a two-fold approach to the Buddha. There is the Buddha as he is in himself, and also his manifestations or magical transformations – the Buddha for himself and for others. The Buddha for himself is said or implied at various places in this vast and heterogeneous sūtra to be the universe itself, to be the same as 'absence of intrinsic existence' or emptiness, and to be the Buddha's all-pervading omniscient awareness. As we have seen, from the visionary, experiential and magical perspective of the sūtra these are not necessarily contradictory. The universe of the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* is called the *dharmadhātu* – the Dharma-realm. This is not the universe as seen by us, however. Rather, the *dharmadhātu* is the universe seen correctly, the quicksilver universe of the visionary perspective wherein all is empty (or all is the play of omniscient awareness) and therefore is seen as a flow lacking hard edges. This is described by the sūtra as a universe of radiance and, in a wonderful image, it is said to be a world of pure luminosity with no shadows. Such is experienced by the meditator. His mind expands, 'the solid outlines of individuality melt away and the feeling of finiteness no more oppresses (him)' (Suzuki 1968: 149–50). In the *Gaṇḍavyūha* Sudhana the Pilgrim, our hero, 'felt as if both his body and mind completely melted away; he saw that all thoughts departed away from his consciousness; in his mind there were no impediments, and all intoxications vanished' (*ibid*.: 199 n.). This universe *is* the Buddha. At the same time what makes it this universe, what gives it the flow, is emptiness. It is a Universe of Truth. This is the way things really are. Thus:

> Clearly to know that all *dharmas*
> Are without any self-essence at all;
> To understand the nature of *dharmas* in this way
> Is to see Vairocana.[13]

Moreover, in this state where all is perceived correctly, all is seen as a mental creation. One's mind can therefore penetrate all things, and the Buddha is this all-penetrating, all-transforming awareness.[14] This penetrating awareness has many powers to help others and is, as all-penetrating, present in all beings.[15]

There is one particular feature of the world as seen by a Buddha which is repeatedly stressed and for which the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* is justly famous. This is interpenetration. In a world with no hard edges, the world of luminous flow without shadows, all things infinitely interpenetrate:

> They . . . perceive that the fields full of assemblies, the beings and aeons which are as many as all the dust particles, are all present in every particle of dust. They perceive that the many fields and assemblies and the beings and the aeons are all reflected in each particle of dust.
>
> (Gómez 1967: lxxxviii)

The world as seen by the Buddhas, the *dharmadhātu*, the way things really are, is one of infinite interpenetration. Inside everything is everything else. And yet no things are confused. As a description of the way things are in our unenlightened world this seems incredible. But the *dharmadhātu* is the world as seen by the Buddha wherein there is no question of *the* world (an objectively real world 'out there') as distinct from meditative vision. Thus the sūtra is less concerned with describing the world this way as with recounting the Bodhisattva's attainments by which he can see the world in such a light, and the Bodhisattva's miraculous powers by which, through his magical interventions in this world with no fixed hard boundaries, he can cause things to interpenetrate. The Buddha:

> has the miraculous power of manifesting all the images of the Dharmadhātu within one single particle of dust . . . of revealing all the Buddhas of the past with their successive doings within a single pore of his skin . . . of evolving clouds of transformation from a single pore of his skin and making them fill all the Buddha lands . . . of revealing in a single pore of his skin the whole history of all the worlds in the ten quarters from their first appearance until their final destruction.
>
> (Suzuki 1968: 157)

The *Gaṇḍavyūha Sūtra* is the climax of this extraordinary story. It is a Pilgrim's Progress in which our hero, Sudhana, on the Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī's advice, travels throughout India from one teacher to another, gradually advancing in spiritual growth.[16] Since the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* is a sūtra of spiritual experience, so the *Gaṇḍavyūha* is accordingly less narrative than an unfolding panorama of Sudhana's experiences. Among his spiritual friends, his teachers (53 in all), many are lay people, from all social groups. Of particular interest is Vasumitrā, the prostitute. She is nonetheless an advanced Bodhisattva. The doctrine of skill-in-means apparently knows no bounds. For some suffering sentient beings the best way to receive the teaching of the Buddha is through Vasumitrā's technique of embraces and kisses: 'Some, with only an embrace, obtain renunciation of passion and attain the Bodhisattva meditation. . . . Some, with only a kiss . . .' (Wilson in Paul 1979: 161). Religion, it seems, can be fun.

Eventually Sudhana meets the Bodhisattva Maitreya. Maitreya shows him a great tower, the Tower of Vairocana, which represents the *dharmadhātu*, the Universe itself as seen in the Buddha's vision. Sudhana enters the tower. The experience is overwhelming:

> To Sudhana's wondering gaze, the interior of the Tower reveals itself as being as wide as the sky. . . . Moreover within the tower there are hundreds of thousands of towers, each one as exquisitely adorned . . . and each one, while preserving its individual existence, at the same time offering no obstruction to all the rest. . . . He sees Maitreya and other Bodhisattvas entering into *samādhi* [meditative absorption] and emitting from the pores of their skin multitudes of transformation bodies of various kinds. He also hears all the teachings of the Buddha melodiously issuing from every single pore of the skin of all the Bodhisattvas. He beholds all the Buddhas, together with their respective assemblies, and is the spectator of their different activities. In one particularly high, spacious, and exquisitely decorated tower, of incomparable beauty, he sees at one glance the entire trichiliocosm . . . and in each one of these worlds he sees Maitreya's descent to earth, his nativity, and all the subsequent events of his final existence. . . . He sees, moreover, pillars emitting multicoloured radiance. . . .[17]

Sudhana sees himself and his career in each of the towers. From the egoistic perspective it is admittedly difficult even to imagine what such an experience could possibly feel like.

Finally, onto this stage which is already the *dharmadhātu* we must introduce the person who, for the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*, is the greatest Bodhisattva of them all. This is Samantabhadra ('Good in All Ways'). In a sense, Samantabhadra's life, experiences, and being are the underlying theme of the whole vast sūtra. Samantabhadra is a Bodhisattva, or Buddha (at such rarefied levels distinctions tend to get blurred), who is used by the sūtra as the model, the path, and the goal. The *Gaṇḍavyūha*'s 'Prayer of Samantabhadra' forms an oft-repeated set of Bodhisattva vows, a devotional hymn beginning with what is called in Tibet the 'seven-limbed ritual':

(i) Prostration:

> I reverently prostrate myself before all the Victorious Ones [Buddhas], multiplying my obeisances as if with bodies as numerous as the dust particles in the earth. . . .
> I rejoice in the belief that the entire Universe is filled with the Victorious Ones; even on the tip of a grain of sand, Buddhas as numerous as particles of dust exist, each of them sitting in the center surrounded by bodhisattvas.
>
> (de Bary *et al*. 1972: 173)

(ii) Making grand mental and real offerings to the Buddhas.
(iii) Confession.[18]
(iv) Rejoicing in the merit of oneself and others. To rejoice in merit is itself meritorious.
(v) Requesting the Enlightened Beings to turn the Wheel of the Doctrine.

(vi) Requesting them also not to enter into any selfish type of nirvāṇa which would abandon sentient beings.
(vii) Finally, dedication of the merit gained through performing this Seven-limbed Ritual towards the development of one's spiritual path to enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings.

Samantabhadra, and the practitioner too, following Samantabhadra's model, then make a number of great Bodhisattva vows. For example:

> May all beings in the ten quarters always be happy and healthy; may they be endowed with the benefits of piety, may they be successful and their wishes be fulfilled. . . .
> Allow me to work for the welfare of creatures, as long as the lands and roads exist in the ten quarters, relieving anxieties, extinguishing pain. . . .
>
> Allow me to work till the end of time, adjusting myself to the lives of beings, fulfilling the life of Enlightenment. . . .
>
> May I see the Buddhas while practicing the course to Enlightenment; on the tip of a particle of dust there are fields as numerous as particles of dust, and in each of these fields there are innumerable Buddhas. . . .
>
> (*ibid.*: 174 ff.)

Our pilgrim, Sudhana, wishes actually to see Samantabhadra. To do so he has to develop 'a great mind vast as space, an unhindered mind relinquishing all worlds and free from attachments, an unobstructed mind . . . an unimpeded mind'. And:

> He perceives ten auspicious signs and ten kinds of light and then Samantabhadra sitting in the Buddha's assembly. Observing Samantabhadra, he sees in every pore every feature of the mundane and spiritual worlds, and finally he sees himself in Samantabhadra's being, traversing infinite realms, coursing in a sphere of endless, inexhaustible knowledge, ultimately becoming equal to Samantabhadra and the Buddha, filling the cosmos.
>
> (Cleary 1983: 9)

And Thomas Cleary finishes: 'This concludes what many have considered the most grandiose, the most comprehensive, and the most beautifully arrayed of the Buddhist scriptures.'

The Huayan tradition in China

The phenomenon of patriarchs is a particular feature of East Asian Buddhism, in cultures dominated by the Confucian reverence for ancestors. It perhaps originated in the concern within the Chan school for authentic transmission and legitimacy. Within the Huayan tradition in China there is said (retrospectively) to have been five patriarchs: Dushun (Tu-shun; 557–640), Zhiyan (Chih-yen; 602–68), Fazang, Chengguan (Cheng-kuan; 738–839), and Zongmi (Tsung-mi; 780–841). This patriarchal scheme, however, is apt to be confusing for the modern scholar of Huayan. The earliest use of the expression 'Huayan

school' appears to have been with Chengguan. Fazang was the principal systematizer of the tradition and is therefore often spoken of as the actual creator of Huayan as a school. Nevertheless, creative Huayan elements were present before Dushun and after Zongmi, and we should not assume that even the patriarchs of Huayan all held exactly the same view (see Gimello 1983: 321).

Huayan thought is, perhaps, less philosophy than the systematic explanation of the *dharmadhātu*, the world of visionary experience and magic. It is sometimes said to be the philosophical or doctrinal articulation of Chan (Zen) meditation. Argument frequently gives way to assertion. Dushun, the first patriarch, was known in his day not as a philosophical thinker but rather as a wonder-worker, particularly renowned for his healing abilities. It is said that when he led the monks to meditate on Li Mountain all the many insects of the locality left at Dushun's request, so that the monks could plant vegetables for food without infringing the precept against killing. Another time a terrible dragon left on Dushun's arrival in the tormented neighbourhood. According to a widely-held view Dushun was in fact the Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī himself. He was one of a number of great Chinese Buddhist teachers who lived close to the people and whose magical functions were important both for the spread of Buddhism and for the physical welfare of the masses. One story records how he miraculously made a relatively small amount of food suffice for a much larger number than expected at a meal. Dushun's own religious practices may well have centred on reciting the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*. Miracles brought about by reciting the Mahāyāna sūtras, miracles promised by the sūtras themselves, are frequent features of East Asian Buddhism, and a number of stories of miraculous interventions through reciting the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* survive. The hermit monk Puan (P'u-an; 530–609), for example, through the power of the sūtra successfully moved a large boulder which might otherwise have fallen on his flimsy hermitage, froze to the ground a group of archers who, incited by a jealous rival, wished to murder him, and even raised a dead follower to life. All this, Puan insisted, was not due to his own merits but to the power of the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*.[19]

Dushun and Puan were miracle-working contemplatives who lived in the country close to the peasantry.[20] Fazang too, according to tradition, as a youth lived the ascetic life, sustained by weeds, on Taibai (T'ai-pai) Mountain. He remained a layman until, at the age of 28, and a disciple of the second Huayan patriarch Zhiyan, he was appointed abbot of a new monastery by the Tang empress Wu Zetian (Wu Tse-t'ien). Fazang then became ordained. It is said that wonders took place at Fazang's sermons. Lights emanated from his mouth and the earth shook (Chang 1971: 237–8). While Dushun was a friend of the masses, however, Fazang and the systematic Huayan synthesis he created were closely associated with the political and spiritual aspirations of the notorious Empress Wu and her court.

Empress Wu (*c.* 625–705) was the only woman in Chinese history to become emperor in her own right. As such she has been mercilessly vilified and condemned by Confucian historians ever since. At odds with Confucian orthodoxy, and the daughter of a pious Buddhist mother, Empress Wu made Buddhism the *de facto* state religion of China.[21] She

sought to find in Buddhism an ideology which could rival that of Confucius and provide a basis for female rulership. She utilized the Mahāyāna doctrine that a Bodhisattva can appear in female form for the benefit of sentient beings, and spread the idea that she was an emanation of the Bodhisattva Maitreya, the Bodhisattva who will be the next Buddha on this earth. Maitreya's advent is popularly associated with the coming of a Utopia. She also portrayed herself as a *cakravartin*, the Wheel-turning Emperor, destined to rule the whole world.[22] The common factor, again, is that the *cakravartin*, in Buddhist legend, establishes social harmony and ensures Utopia. Effectively, the *cakravartin* is Maitreya himself. Both were now incarnate in the ruling Empress Wu. Empress Wu was also naturally interested in the *tathāgatagarbha* doctrines which depict the core of each sentient being, male or female, that which really matters, as the same. This was particularly useful to her since the *tathāgatagarbha* teaching is prominently set forth in the *Śrīmālā Sūtra*, in which the principal figure is a Buddhist queen. Fazang himself was strongly influenced by the *Awakening of Faith*'s Buddha-nature doctrine, which he used as a basis upon which to construct his Huayan philosophy of mutual identity and mutual interpenetration. Empress Wu was also attracted by the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* in her attempt to create a state ideology of Buddhism. The *Gaṇḍavyūha Sūtra* gave an important role as Bodhisattva teachers to women – even those lay women whose morality was, to uninitiated eyes, open to question.[23] Moreover, the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*, with its doctrine of a central Buddha surrounded by infinite Bodhisattvas, pervading with his mind all of reality, present in all things, all ranked in harmonious interdependence, provided the empress with an interesting model for a political theory which related empress to court and thence to people and satellite states.[24] In Japan too the Emperor Shōmu (reigned 724–49) set out to rule on the basis of Huayan, and to that end he sponsored the building of Tōdaiji, the monastery which is still the seat of Kegon (Huayan) teaching in Japan, with its enormous bronze statue of Mahāvairocana, the emperor writ large.[25]

The political significance of Huayan may well have suggested itself to Empress Wu in the course of Fazang's famous demonstration of interpenetration. Fazang appears to have been a good teacher, a master of visual aids with a very Chinese way of bringing Indian abstraction down to earth. On a number of occasions Empress Wu, not surprisingly, seems to have had some difficulty in grasping the intricacies of Huayan thought. On one occasion when she had experienced problems with the doctrine of interpenetration Fazang called for a candle and placed it surrounded by mirrors on every side. When lit, the candle was reflected in each mirror, and each of the reflections in every other mirror so that in any one mirror were the images of all the others. One demonstration is worth a thousand words.[26] Unfortunately the close association of Empress Wu with the Huayan cannot have helped the popularity of Huayan among Confucian literati after her death.[27] Huayan as a separate school did not survive the 9th century persecution, but its thought became the central teaching of that fund of doctrinal material appropriated by the primarily practice-oriented schools of Chan and the Pure Land tradition which survived the persecution and prospered.

Huayan thought – Fazang's 'Treatise on the Golden Lion'

Among the many works of Fazang his *Treatise on the Golden Lion* (*Jinshizizhang*; *Chin-shih-tzu Chang*) is particularly noteworthy as a short summary of Huayan thought composed ostensibly with the intention of making it accessible to a lay audience. For our purposes it has the added attraction of being easily available in English translation.[28]

The *Golden Lion* is said to have arisen out of poor Empress Wu's puzzlement:

> Fa Tsang [Fazang] pointed to the golden lion guarding the palace hall and used it as a metaphor to illustrate the teachings. The doctrines were thereby made extremely clear and easy to understand, and the Empress quickly came to a full comprehension of the essence of the teaching.[29]

Huayan thought is complex and often obscure. It is very easy to mistake what are in reality, perhaps, instructions for meditation or descriptions of mystic vision for philosophical statements depicting the true way of things. If Empress Wu experienced difficulties she could speak personally with Fazang. For us the problems are so much greater, and the *Golden Lion*, perhaps because of its brevity, nevertheless remains, it seems to me, an obscure document.

Fazang begins with Huayan ontology. Gold is lacking its own intrinsic existence and it is for this reason that a craftsman can fashion an object of it – say, Empress Wu's lion. The lion itself comes into existence in dependence upon causes and conditions, but gold is always in some form or another. The gold of the golden lion stands for *li*, usually translated as 'principle' or 'noumenon', while the lion (shape) is *shi* (*shih*), phenomenon. The dyad *li/shi* were standard terms of indigenous Chinese philosophy, and the term *li* had already been appropriated by Chinese Buddhist thinkers prior to Fazang to equal the Buddha-nature: 'Like the Tao [Dao], *li* is the absolute principle behind, in, or above phenomenal changes. The Buddha-nature defined in terms of *li* is, therefore, an *essential, transcendent entity* . . . a priori, perfect and complete' (Lai 1977: 75; Williams 2005b: 163 – italics in original). The Huayan noumenon, Fazang's gold, however, is not something above and behind phenomena. Phenomena are not emanations from the absolute noumenon. Rather, phenomena *are* noumenon – the lion is gold, there is no gold behind the lion, the lion is not an emanation of gold. Gold only exists as having some form or another, in this case that of a lion. There is no gold without form which then takes on, as it were, some form or another. The phenomenal is the noumenal in its phenomenal form. This approach harmonized well with the traditional Chinese this-worldly outlook. The Ultimate is not elsewhere but here and now, in even the smallest, meanest thing. In particular it was easy to blend the Huayan emphasis on phenomena as being noumenon with the very Chinese appreciation of Nature and a vision of enlightenment as living in harmony with Nature or the natural flow of things.[30] Like Nature, or the Dao, the Huayan noumenon is, in a sense, not an aloof, unchanging Absolute but, precisely because it lacks its own intrinsic existence in the Mādhyamika sense, it is dynamic. Gold, through a skilled craftsman, can take on a wide range of different forms.

Nevertheless, Fazang continues, the lion shape is only a (dependently originated) shape. In itself the lion is unreal – there is only gold. The lion seems to exist, but the gold *qua* gold is in another sense unchanging. We might say that from the point of view of gold, the gold has remained constant. From the point of view of gold there has been no change – it is not the concern of gold if someone has fashioned it into a lion, that is, they have imposed a lion-image onto it. But equally, since gold always has *a* shape, the gold *qua* gold does not impede, or stand in the way of, its shape or form. It is only through form that gold *is*, even though from the point of view of gold itself there is no lion form.

Since there is only gold, Fazang argues, then when the lion shape comes into existence it is in fact the gold that comes into existence. This is, on the surface, paradoxical in the extreme. It helps to remember that gold always has a shape, although the shape is nothing in addition to the gold itself. Thus if gold takes on a lion shape it ceases to be gold in, say, bar-shape, and becomes gold in lion-shape. Since 'gold' is equivalent to 'gold in *X*-shape', when the golden lion comes into existence, that is, gold in lion-shape, we can in a sense say that gold comes into existence. Nevertheless, whether the lion shape occurs or ceases the gold *qua* gold neither increases nor decreases. Thus, from an ultimate point of view phenomena are, in Buddhist parlance, unborn.

It is all very well to talk of gold and lions, but these stand for *li* and *shi*, noumenon and phenomenon. What, according to Fazang, are *li* and *shi*? There is little problem concerning phenomena. These are the ordinary phenomena of the universe. Fazang's interpretation of noumenon, however, is a subject of dispute among scholars. Fazang certainly refers to the noumenon as emptiness, and he demonstrates some understanding of the Mādhyamika doctrine that emptiness is the same as absence of intrinsic existence. For this reason a number of modern scholars, particularly Francis Cook, have argued that Fazang's noumenon is in reality nothing other than emptiness, understood in its strictly Mādhyamika sense as nothing more than a negation, absence of intrinsic existence. For Cook there is no Huayan philosophy as such – Huayan is simply Mādhyamika with the Indian negativism replaced by a Chinese emphasis on the natural world and the way things actually do exist (Cook 1977; 1978).

There is a tendency sometimes among modern scholars to reduce all of Mahāyāna philosophy to a series of footnotes to Nāgārjuna, with the rather opaque Nāgārjuna interpreted on controversial issues according to Candrakīrti. This tendency should, I think, be firmly resisted. As we have seen, Mahāyāna thought is not so monolithic. Candrakīrti appears to have been all but unknown in China. It is agreed on all counts that Fazang was strongly influenced by the *Awakening of Faith*, and his noumenon is said to be identical with the *tathāgatagarbha*.[31] In China Nāgārjuna himself was thought to be a commentator on the *Awakening of Faith*, and therefore to hold a *tathāgatagarbha* doctrine. Thus Nāgārjuna's sense of 'emptiness' was often taken to imply more than just 'absence of intrinsic existence'. It seems that the different senses of 'emptiness' found in Indian Buddhist thought were not always clearly distinguished in China. Moreover Francis Cook's theory tends to ignore

Huayan sources which speak of the Universe as in reality the One Mind, and at the moment I still favour the older view that Fazang's noumenon is in fact this One Mind. The imagery used of gold/lion and water/wave suggests that the noumenon is more than just a mere negative, absence of intrinsic existence. The Chinese word *li* also carries with it a more positive connotation. One text, attributed to Dushun but now thought to be by Fazang, refers to the noumenon as 'the true thusness of mind' and phenomena as 'birth-and-death of mind'.[32] Fazang speaks also of the 'one essence', the undefiled essence, the *tathāgatagarbha* 'that is inherently pure, complete and luminous', and quotes the *Awakening of Faith* on this essence as having 'the meaning of mind inherently pure' (Cleary 1983: 152). Elsewhere Fazang explains that according to the *Awakening of Faith*, the ontology of which he places above that of Mādhyamika, 'all things are nothing but Absolute Mind' (Gregory 1983b: 36–7). Indeed in China and Japan the *Awakening of Faith* was often thought to be a Huayan text. Zongmi, the fifth Huayan patriarch, himself criticizes the Mādhyamika doctrine of emptiness interpreted as the final teaching, and speaks of the ultimate truth as 'a single, true, spiritual Nature, uncreated and imperishable'. This is the *tathāgatagarbha* and the 'True Mind'.[33] It seems that inasmuch as Huayan scholars did distinguish the Mādhyamika emptiness as absence of intrinsic existence alone, to that extent they saw the Huayan noumenon as beyond the Ultimate Truth of Mādhyamika.

Thus far Fazang's ontology. He uses this ontology in order to clarify and explain the characteristic Huayan doctrines of mutual identity and mutual interpenetration. This explanation is called the 'Ten Mysterious Gates', of which the first is the most important and, in Huayan fashion, is said to contain the others. This first gate is termed 'simultaneous complete correspondence'. Both gold and lion exist simultaneously; both, Fazang says, are perfect and complete. There are two ways of interpreting this obscure point.[34] First, noumenon and phenomena mutually interpenetrate and are (in a sense) identical. There is no opposition between the two. The one does not cancel out the other. Second, Fazang explains elsewhere that since all things arise interdependently (following Mādhyamika), and since the links of interdependence expand throughout the entire universe and at all time (past, present, and future depend upon each other, which is to say the total *dharmadhātu* arises simultaneously), so in the totality of interdependence, the *dharmadhātu*, all phenomena are mutually interpenetrating and identical.

This is how I understand what Fazang is trying to say here. First, since all phenomena are nothing more than noumenon in a particular form, and the form does not in itself exist, so all phenomena are said to be identical. Moreover, noumenon cannot in itself be divided. One piece of gold and another piece of gold, as gold, are not different. The difference lies in spatial separation, and that is something to do with shape or form, not the gold *qua* gold. Since a phenomenon is only noumenon, and since between any two 'instantiations' of noumenon there is, as noumenon, no difference, so each phenomenon is in fact the same as any other phenomenon. Furthermore, since each instantiation of

noumenon is noumenon itself (noumenon cannot be divided), so each phenomenon is also all phenomena. Hence there is mutual identity and interpenetration. Second, since the *dharmadhātu* is a totality of interdependent elements, and according to Mādhyamika teaching each entity lacks intrinsic existence and only *is* in terms of an infinite network of causal interrelationships so, if any entity were taken away, the entire Universe would collapse. This means that each entity is a cause for the totality. Moreover the totality is, of course, a cause for each entity. Since each entity is a cause, *the* cause, for the totality – it is that without which the totality could not occur – and *nothing more* (for Mādhyamika 'to be' is only explicable in terms of causal relationships), so each entity is the same as any other entity. Again, if any one entity were removed, that totality would not occur. Thus each entity exerts total causal power. But if each entity in the Universe exerts total causal power each entity must contain each other entity. Once more, we have mutual identity and interpenetration. And yet, of course, none of this prevents each entity from occupying its own place in the totality – each entity remains discrete and entities do not obstruct each other.

Finally, lest all this talk of gold and lions has confused, Fazang reminds us that this is not a novel physics or a lesson for craftsmen. Both gold and lion in reality adopt various forms in accordance with the mind, a transformation of Mind Only. And here, perhaps, we should leave Fazang and his *Treatise on the Golden Lion*. He has much more to say in even that short text, but we have met the main points and gained some idea, a sampler, of the nature, complex and obscure, of Huayan thought. It is an attempt to express in rational terms a magical and mystical vision. Some (among whom I am not necessarily one) would consider that attempt doomed to failure.

A note on some aspects of Huayan practice

Huayan, in common with much of East Asian Buddhism, particularly Chan, for which it is often said to provide a philosophical foundation, favours the teaching of sudden enlightenment. This is not only because the Buddha-nature, the One Mind, is already present, pure and radiant, untainted in all sentient beings, but also because the Huayan doctrines of identity and interpenetration entail that Buddhahood is already present at the first stage of the Bodhisattva's path to enlightenment. 'On each stage', Fazang says, 'one is thus both a Bodhisattva and a Buddha.' This takes place from the very beginning. According to Fazang if the Bodhisattva has begun, has perfected his or her faith, he or she is already a Buddha, with all that this means in terms of the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*. The Bodhisattva must see himself or herself as already a Buddha, and behave accordingly. For the layman Li Tongxuan (Li T'ung-hsüan; 635–730), who contributed a great deal towards developing a practical spirituality on the basis of the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* and Huayan thought, followed by the great Korean monk Chinul (1158–1210):

> [T]he first access of faith in the mind of the practitioner is in itself the culmination of the entire path, the very realization of final Buddhahood. . . . 'Faith' or confidence in the possibility of enlightenment is nothing but enlightenment itself, *in an anticipatory and causative modality*.[35]

To Fazang the Sudden Teaching was necessary because the noumenon, Suchness or Thusness, is beyond language and therefore beyond stages of practice, which have at the best a provisional validity. Practice moreover cannot create a state of enlightenment which is not there already, and thus there can be no causal relationship between practice and enlightenment. In spite of this, there is no implication that in East Asian Buddhism those who hold the teaching of Sudden Enlightenment sit and wait for enlightenment to happen. Rather, moral and meditative practice serve, it is said, to bring out what one already is.[36]

The *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* and its recitation formed the central concern of a number of Chinese lay Buddhist societies. It seems that these societies were a major feature of Chinese Buddhist practice. Originally they were founded in order to sponsor vegetarian feasts which were held on holy days, as thanksgivings, and so on. The result of taking part in this sponsorship is merit, a principal concern of laity (but not only laity) throughout the Buddhist world. Subsequently the societies convened in order to generate merit through chanting a favourite sūtra. This merit could be used for a number of purposes – bringing prosperity or children, helping one's ancestors, or it could be dedicated towards a favourable future rebirth or even (if so disposed) the highest Mahāyāna purpose, the welfare of all sentient beings.[37] The *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* was a particularly favoured sūtra for such societies, probably due to the miraculous powers associated with this work, itself the result, perhaps, of the sūtra's staggering visionary and miraculous content. It seems likely that *Avataṃsaka* societies developed around miracle-working monks such as Puan or Dushun, for whom chanting the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* formed their principal daily practice. These monks organized the lay fraternity, and developed a cult centred on the sūtra itself, rather than on themselves as miracle workers. Such popular cults and feasts, it has been argued, fitted naturally into Chinese society, taking the place for Buddhists of communal feasts founded on sacrifices to local deities. As time passed meritorious lay recitation of the sūtra became more important than the feasts themselves. Some of these *Avataṃsaka* societies were very large indeed, and highly organized. Over the centuries such groups contributed to the growth of secret and often millenarian societies, which were to trouble central government in later Chinese history. With the collapse of state and state patronage in late Tang times the lay *Avataṃsaka* societies also became more important as patrons of the Buddhist order and Buddhist works. This growing importance of local patronage is reflected in the growing practical and popular concern of Huayan in the late Tang as it ceased to be an independent school and gradually fused with traditions like Chan (Gregory 1983a: 278 ff.).

The *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* and Vairocana in Buddhist art

Set in the jungles of Java and dating from the late eighth–ninth centuries CE, the stūpa complex of Borobudur is one of the enduring monuments of Mahāyāna Buddhist civilization. The whole forms a *maṇḍala*, a cosmogram in the shape of a terraced hill. The hill is composed of, in ascending order, five rectangular and four circular levels. The circular levels contain three circles of small stūpas, culminating in a great central stūpa. Sculptures and friezes in the galleries and niches of the rectangular levels indicate that as the worshipper ascends the monument he or she passes from the lower levels of the cosmos to the Buddhas above, and eventually to the central Buddha. These sculptures and friezes instruct the practitioner in karma and rebirth, tell the life story of Śākyamuni Buddha, and illustrate popular Jātaka tales, stories of the Buddha's previous lives as a Bodhisattva. They also illustrate the entire text of the *Gaṇḍavyūha Sūtra*, Thus we have a panel in which Sudhana, full of joy, is depicted jumping up three steps in one leap. The Bodhisattva vows to be a refuge for all beings, and is depicted accompanied by beings from the hells and other realms of rebirth. In one panel Samantabhadra, portrayed with an insignia of a lotus with one stalk and three buds, stretches out his hand to stroke Sudhana on the head. Offerings of music to the Buddha are illustrated by a lively scene of a central Buddha in tranquil meditation surrounded by vigorous drummers, figures blowing trumpets, and other instrumentalists. In one of the Samantabhadra vows it is said that his aspiration will end only 'when space comes to an end'. This is cleverly depicted by the Bodhisattva flying through the air, presumably trying to find the end of space.[38]

It is in Central Asia, not surprisingly perhaps, that we find some of the most interesting and relatively early artistic creations clearly depicting features associated with the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*. These are representations of the Buddha Vairocana as a cosmic Buddha, a Buddha containing within himself all the other Buddhas and all features of the universe. From the sixth-century Khotan region there remains a painted panel of a standing Buddha surrounded by a halo, bearing other Buddhas on his chest. Again, on the northern Central Asian trade route, from Kyzyl, near Kucha, there survives a sixth- or seventh-century cave painting of a standing Buddha. This Buddha has his right hand raised, five Buddhas across his chest, and further figures down his legs. Figures also radiate out into his halo. In a further, almost contemporary, wall painting from Karashahr, the halo is composed of ocean scenes (the cosmic ocean?) with lotuses, underwater serpents (*nāgas*), and ducks. Once more there are Buddhas and other figures across the chest, arms, and legs, while two figures on the knees have been identified as the sun and moon. Finally, a particularly famous seventh-century wall painting from Balawaste, on the southern Silk Road, depicts Vairocana in meditation, his torso and arms covered in cosmic symbols with sun and moon on his shoulders and the cosmic mountain Meru on his chest. There also survives a contemporaneous bronze-gilt statue of Vairocana, traced to Central Asia, again a standing figure, bearing Mount Meru, sun and moon on his front, and the paths of rebirth on his back. In China too we

find from the sixth century figures of Vairocana, with Buddhas and sentient beings depicted in or across his robes.[39]

These figures depict in a very vivid way the cosmic nature of Vairocana. Another way of depicting this was through sheer size. Such technique was used effectively in China and Japan where, as we have seen, there was a political tendency to identify Vairocana with the emperor. From about the fifth century in China, following perhaps Indian models, huge cave temples were constructed, adorned with statues and paintings many of which have survived the ravages of time and barbarians. Cave temples had obvious advantages. They were durable and easy to keep in good repair (no leaking roofs), and they could be kept warm in winter and cool in summer. One also suspects that they provided a psychological image of emanation from one mass and return to unity. Among the most important of the cave temple complexes is that of Longmen (Lung-men), near Luoyang in Northern China. The construction of temples and images at Longmen was given enthusiastic support by Empress Wu. The shrines were hollowed out of the sandstone cliffs of a river gorge, and the central carved figure is an enormous Vairocana Buddha, some 15 metres from the base of the pedestal to the tip of his halo. This figure took three years to carve, from 672 to 675. It was carved, therefore, during the reign of Empress Wu and the lifetime of Fazang himself. The figure is solid, aloof, and majestic, wearing a monastic robe of simple folds. Small – very small – Buddha figures are depicted in the halo, radiating from the central cosmic Buddha.[40]

Huayan Buddhism came to Japan in the eighth century. It was brought from China by a number of Chinese missionaries, and also by an Indian, Bodhisena. The Emperor Shōmu, Bodhisena, together with Gyōgi, surnamed 'the Bodhisattva' – a priest who spread Buddhism, engaged in public works, and advised the emperor – and also Rōben, the abbot, jointly founded the monastery of Tōdaiji. This monastery is to the present day the centre of Kegon (Huayan) Buddhism in Japan, with some 70,486 adherents in 1970.[41] From the beginning Japanese Buddhism was closely tied to the welfare of the state, and this was never more so than during the Nara period (710–94). When, in 735–7, a smallpox epidemic ravaged Japan the emperor ordained that every province should have a 5-metre-high image of the Buddha and a copy of the *Perfection of Wisdom*. Subsequent edicts founded monasteries and stūpas. All monasteries were to be supervised by Tōdaiji. But the principal anti-smallpox precaution, indeed the dominant concern of the age, was the construction at Tōdaiji of an enormous bronze image of Vairocana, over 16 metres high. It is said that the Shintō Sun Goddess gave her permission for the enterprise. Vairocana, she said, is the Sun – a useful basis for Buddhist–Shintō syncretism and further Buddhist missionary activity. The figure was probably based on the great Chinese images, but the Tōdaiji Buddha was cast, in sections, out of metal. The first discovery of gold in Japan soon after the completion of the statue was held to be a miraculous blessing and enabled the whole image to be gilded. The wooden building which housed the Tōdaiji Vairocana remains the largest wooden structure ever built. Unfortunately, however, it was burnt down in the

twelfth century, as was also its replacement in the sixtenth century (demonstrating another advantage of caves). The present building is only two-thirds of the original size, but is still the largest wooden building in the world under a single roof. The Vairocana figure itself is unimpressive apart from its size, since over the years it has been badly damaged, particularly due to fire, and badly restored.

The Bodhisattva Samantabhadra (Japanese: Fugen) is often portrayed in Japanese art, usually associated with his 'vehicle', a white elephant. While seen (along with Mañjuśrī) as one of the principal Bodhisattva attendants of Vairocana, the portrayal of Samantabhadra in Japanese art is as much due to his connection with the favourite Japanese sūtra, however, the *Lotus Sūtra*, as with the Kegon tradition. It is to this sūtra, therefore, that we shall now turn.

7 *The* Saddharmapuṇḍarīka (Lotus) Sūtra *and its influences*

There were once two Japanese priests, Hōgon and Renzō. Hōgon practised reciting the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*, while Renzō was a devotee of the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* (*White Lotus of the True Dharma*) *Sūtra*. As a result of the power of the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*, and Hōgon's virtue, a deity regularly supplied Hōgon with food. Out of his charity, and perhaps also a little spiritual pride, Hōgon requested one day that the deity provide enough food for two, and invited Renzō to dine. Alas, in spite of the deity's agreement, on the appointed day no food appeared. Evening came, and Renzō, realizing perhaps that he had something better to do, returned home. As soon as he left the hermitage the deity appeared, laden with food. At first sight one might suppose that Renzō was lacking in virtue – but nothing could be further from the truth. It seems that Renzō, through the power of the *Lotus Sūtra*, came accompanied by so many invisible protector deities that the poor deity of the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* could not get through the door. Hōgon, duly impressed, abandoned reciting the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* and became a fervent supporter of the *Lotus Sūtra* instead. As so often, religious practice is a matter of power and the greater magical potency lay with the *Lotus Sūtra*.

This story, and many like it, comes from the *Hokkegenki*, an eleventh-century collection of miraculous tales attesting to the efficacy of having faith in, reciting, copying, and generally promulgating the *Lotus Sūtra* (Dykstra 1983: 59–60). For many East Asian Buddhists since early times the *Lotus Sūtra* contains the final teaching of the Buddha, complete and sufficient for salvation. For many contemporary Japanese Buddhists who follow the lead of Nichiren (1222–82), the *Lotus Sūtra* is not only sufficient for salvation but is the only sūtra adequate to the task during the present epoch of spiritual decline (Japanese: *mappō*). From China we are told of a court official who recited the whole sūtra once every day for 30 years, and three times a day after the age of 80. A certain Chinese abbot recited the *Lotus* 37,000 times in 30 years. If we can believe the *Hokkegenki*, there were Japanese who recited the complete sūtra more than 30 times a day and 1,000 times a month.[1] One Chinese monk speaks of the 'inconceivable merit' of writing out the *Lotus Sūtra* in one's own blood.[2]

Any text which inspires such fervent enthusiasm (and not a little of East Asian art and literature) deserves closer examination.[3] The Sanskrit text of the *Lotus Sūtra* survives in a

number of different versions, mainly fragmentary, the textual history of which is complex. The earliest extant Chinese translation was made by Dharmarakṣa in 286 CE (revised 290 CE). The version which conquered East Asia, however, and therefore by far the most significant version given the sūtra's importance in East Asian Buddhism, was the *Lotus* translated by Kumārajīva and his team of translators in 406.[4] One should never assume, incidentally, that because we are dealing with a sūtra originally composed in India an extant Sanskrit text must, where they differ, represent an earlier or more authentic version of the text than any Chinese translation. The codification of the Canon, and the printing and preservation of texts in China, has meant that Chinese translations will often be much earlier than any Sanskrit manuscript. To think of an extant Sanskrit text as *the*, or even an, original is fraught with textual and historical problems.

Kumārajīva's *Lotus Sūtra* consists of 28 chapters. It is not a homogeneous work. Japanese scholars, who have carried out extensive study of the *Lotus Sūtra*, are inclined to see the oldest parts of the text (Chs 1–9, plus Ch. 17) as having been composed between the first century BCE and the first century CE. In Japan it is commonly held that most of the text had appeared by the end of the second century CE, although this could be questioned and still awaits fully convincing evidence.[5]

The *Lotus* is a dramatic sūtra. There are frequent changes of scene and apart from its message the success of the sūtra has been due perhaps in no small part to its use of several striking parables. The reasonable antiquity of the sūtra, or possibly its controversial message, is vividly attested by its need to establish its authority against those who would ridicule both the sūtra and its preachers. According to Sino-Japanese tradition the *Lotus Sūtra* was the final teaching of the Buddha, preached immediately before he manifested his final nirvāṇa, his death or, in the light of the teaching of the *Lotus Sūtra* itself, his disappearance from human view.

In the sūtra the Buddha, Śākyamuni Buddha, is at pains to make it quite clear to his audience that he, as a Buddha, is infinitely superior both cognitively and spiritually to those who have attained other religious goals, Buddhist and non-Buddhist:

> The Hero of the World is incalculable.
> Among gods, worldlings,
> And all varieties of living beings,
> None can know the Buddha.
> As to the Buddha's strengths, . . . his sorts of fearlessness, . . .
> His deliverances, . . . and his samādhis,
> As well as the other dharmas of a Buddha,
> None can fathom them.
>
> (Hurvitz 1976: 23)

Nevertheless he, the Buddha, has employed his skill-in-means and devices (*upāya/upāyakauśalya*) in order to adapt his teaching to the level of his hearers. This teaching of skill-in-means, or skilful means, is a key doctrine of the Mahāyāna, and one of the key

teachings of the *Lotus Sūtra*. It was undoubtedly one of the factors responsible for the success of the *Lotus Sūtra* in East Asia. Among the principal problems which faced Buddhist missionaries during the early transmission of Buddhism to China, and thence, of course, to other countries in East Asia, was on the one hand the quantity of apparently contradictory teachings attributed to the Buddha, and on the other a pressing need to adapt the Buddhist message to suit cultures very different from those in India. Broadly speaking, in the *Lotus Sūtra* the device of skill-in-means – the Buddha's cleverness in applying appropriate strategems – is used to suggest that out of his infinite compassion the Buddha himself adapted his teaching to the level of his hearers.[6] Where Buddhas are concerned, all is subordinate to their compassionate intentions that entail appropriate behaviour in that particular context. Hence, although the corpus of teachings attributed to the Buddha, if taken as a whole, embodies many contradictions, these contradictions are only apparent. Teachings are appropriate to the context in which they are given and thus their contradictions evaporate. The Buddha's teachings are to be used like ladders, or, to apply an age-old Buddhist image, like a raft employed to cross a river. There is no point in carrying the raft once the journey has been completed and its function fulfilled. When used, such a teaching transcends itself.[7]

The doctrine of skill-in-means prompted the Chinese Buddhist philosophical schools to produce schemata known as *panjiao* (*p'an-chiao*). Each school ranks the Buddha's teaching in progression leading up to the highest teaching, the 'most true' teaching, embodied in the principal sūtra of that school. Thus each school explains the purpose for teaching each doctrine, and the reason why only its own sūtra embodies the final teaching – inasmuch as the final teaching can be captured directly or indirectly in words.[8]

Moreover the doctrine of skill-in-means was taken to entail an apparently infinite flexibility in adapting the teaching of the Buddha to suit changing circumstances. The Buddha teaches out of his infinite compassion for sentient beings. All teachings are exactly appropriate to the level of those for whom they were intended. Any adaptation whatsoever, provided it is animated by the Buddha's compassion and wisdom, and is suitable for the recipient, is a part of or relatively acceptable to Buddhism. The Buddha, or indeed in some contexts a Bodhisattva, is quite capable of teaching even non-Buddhist teachings if that is for the benefit of beings. In point of fact, the application of skill-in-means in Mahāyāna Buddhism comes to extend beyond simply adapting the doctrine to the level of the hearers to refer to any behaviour by the Buddha or Bodhisattvas which is perhaps not what one might expect, but which is done through the motivation of compassion, animated by wisdom, for the benefit of others. This is well illustrated by another sūtra entirely devoted to skill-in-means, with the shortened title of *Upāyakauśalya Sūtra*. This sūtra contains a series of questions and answers concerning legendary events in the life of Siddhārtha, explaining that they were not what they appeared to be, but served the higher purpose of the Buddha's teaching. For example, why did the Buddha, free of karmic hindrances and omniscient, once return empty-handed from his begging round? This was, it seems, out of his compassion for monks in the future who similarly will return occasionally empty-handed.[9] Sometimes the person who composed

the sūtra seems to have been at a loss, or had to use some ingenuity, to explain a feature of the Buddha's conduct. Why did the Buddha, when still a Bodhisattva just after his birth, walk seven steps?

> If it had been more beneficial to sentient beings to walk six steps than to walk seven steps, the Bodhisattva would have walked six steps. If it had been more beneficial to sentient beings to walk eight steps than to walk seven steps, the Bodhisattva would have walked eight steps. Since it was most beneficial to sentient beings to walk seven steps, he walked seven steps, not six or eight, with no one supporting him.
>
> (Chang 1983: 445)

The teaching of skill-in-means is of some importance when considering Mahāyāna ethics, since there is a tendency to subordinate all to the overriding concern of a truly compassionate motivation accompanied by wisdom. Thus it can be skill-in-means for a Bodhisattva to act in a way contrary to the 'narrower' moral or monastic code of others.[10] The *Upāyakauśalya Sūtra* recounts how the Buddha in a previous life as a celibate religious student had sexual intercourse in order to save a poor girl who threatened to die for love of him (*ibid.*: 433). A story well known in Mahāyāna circles tells similarly how in a previous life, while still a Bodhisattva, the Buddha killed a man. This was the only way to prevent that man from killing 500 others and consequently falling to the lowest hell for a very long time. The Bodhisattva's act was motivated by pure compassion; he realized he was acting against the moral code but he was realistically prepared to suffer in hell himself out of his concern for others. As a result, the sūtra assures us, not only did the Bodhisattva progress spiritually and avoid hell, but the potential murderer was also reborn in a heavenly realm (*ibid.*: 456–7).[11] Stories like this have provided the basis for Mahāyāna Buddhist participation in violence, such as violence by Tibetan monks in defence of the Dharma against the Chinese Communist invasion. Paradoxically, justification in Mahāyāna sūtras for killing by a Bodhisattva has also been used by the Chinese Communists to persuade Chinese Buddhists to take part in the class war and to support the People's Liberation Army.[12] In the *Hokkegenki* we are told of the skill-in-means of a Japanese devotee of the *Lotus Sūtra* who insisted on repeatedly stealing so that he could carry out missionary work, spreading the *Lotus Sūtra* in prison. The chief of police was told in a dream that '[i]n order to save criminals in prison, the holy man Shunchō stayed there seven times. This was nothing but the expedience [skill-in-means] of various Buddhas who concealed their glory from sentient beings in order to make contact with them' (Dykstra 1983: 51).[13]

The teaching of skill-in-means is a crucial ancillary of one of the other principal doctrines of the *Lotus Sūtra*, that of the One Vehicle (*ekayāna*). The sūtra explains that when the Buddha mentioned the topic of skill-in-means a number of Arhats and other followers began to feel uneasy:

> Now, why has the World-Honored One made this speech earnestly praising expedient devices [skill-in-means]? The Dharma which the Buddha has gained is very hard to understand. He has something to say, whose meaning is hard to know, and which no

> voice-hearer [*śrāvaka*] or pratyekabuddha can attain. The Buddha has preached the doctrine of unique deliverance, which means that we, too, gaining this Dharma, shall reach nirvāṇa. Yet now we do not know where this doctrine tends.
>
> (Hurvitz 1976: 25–6)

That is, although it is agreed that the Buddha is in certain respects superior to Arhats and Pratyekabuddhas, as regards their having attained liberation, the goal, freedom from rebirth, Arhats, Pratyekabuddhas, and Buddhas are all on the same level. They are all enlightened. Now the Buddha is portrayed arguing that he taught many provisional ways and goals: his doctrine was taught out of skill adapted to the level of his hearers, with the implied possibility that the goals of Arhatship and Pratyekabuddhahood are no real goals at all, they are merely provisional devices, and there is a great gulf separating Arhatship and Pratyekabuddhahood from the true goal of full and complete Buddhahood.

At first, we are told, the Buddha refused to elaborate on the position newly stated, even when beseeched by Śāriputra:

> Cease, cease! No need to speak.
> My dharma is subtle and hard to imagine.
> Those of overweening pride,
> If they hear it, shall surely neither revere it nor believe in it.
>
> (Hurvitz 1976: 28)

There is a tradition, however, that the Buddha will not refuse a request three times. Upon being begged three times by Śāriputra to elaborate, the Buddha does decide to preach. At this we are told that 5,000 of the gathering got up and left the assembly:

> For what reason? This group had deep and grave roots of sin and overweening pride, imagining themselves to have attained and to have borne witness to what in fact they had not. Having such faults as these, therefore they did not stay. The World-Honored One, silent, did not restrain them. At that time the Buddha declared to Śāriputra: 'My assembly has no more branches and leaves, it has only firm fruit. Śāriputra, it is just as well that such arrogant ones as these have withdrawn'.
>
> (Hurvitz 1976: 29)

Perhaps it is possible to see in this episode a reflection of what really happened in the monastic assembly when a follower of the Mahāyāna rose to preach the new doctrine. Those who dissented withdrew in silence, privately reserving their scorn. The Mahāyānists, on the other hand, placed in the mouth of the Buddha a scathing criticism of the arrogance of those who believed themselves to have attained, or to be well on the path to, what they considered quite erroneously to be the final spiritual goal and were not open to the Mahāyāna perspective. In reality they are not the sweet fruit of the Dharma but only its branches and leaves, its marginalia, its detritus.

What is this new perspective? It is the perspective of the One Vehicle. At the time the *Lotus Sūtra* was compiled it was accepted on all counts that there were Arhats,

Pratyekabuddhas and Buddhas. Most Buddhists were following the path to Arhatship. Somewhere, sometimes, perhaps, there were Pratyekabuddhas, while certain rare beings such as Siddhārtha Gautama became Buddhas. It was agreed that the attributes of these were different, the Buddha was in certain respects superior, but all were truly enlightened – after death none would be reborn. We have in the *Lotus Sūtra*, however, and indeed suggested in texts belonging to certain non-Mahāyāna traditions, a gradual or relative devaluation of Arhats and Pratyekabuddhas, and an elevation of the Buddha and his attainments. The *Lotus Sūtra* marks the culmination of this process.[14] There is in reality only One Vehicle (*yāna*), not three. This One Vehicle is the Supreme Buddha Vehicle.[15] Just as the Buddha is infinitely superior to the Arhat and the Pratyekabuddha, so the only final vehicle is the One Vehicle to Perfect Buddhahood. *All* who are capable of any enlightenment at all, if they attain enlightenment, will eventually become Buddhas. The doctrine of the three vehicles was itself in reality nothing more than the Buddha's skill-in-means, in devising the appropriate strategies in context to help his particular audience:

> Knowing that the beings have various desires and objects to which their thoughts are profoundly attached, following their basic nature, by resort to the expedient power of various means, parables, and phrases, I preach the Dharma to them. Śāriputra, I do this only in order that they may gain the One Buddha Vehicle and knowledge of all modes. Śāriputra, in the world of the ten directions there are not even two vehicles. How much the less can there be three!
>
> (Hurvitz 1976: 31)

It is only because Buddhas who appear at the decay of a cosmic epoch find that beings are so full of demerit and evil that they would not understand such doctrines that they teach the other vehicles. This is their skill-in-means, their use of appropriate expedients. The ways of the Arhat and the Pratyekabuddha are simply pedagogically skilful devices to save those who would not believe if they were told about the only true goal, the full and complete nirvāṇa of a Buddha (*ibid.*: 31). There is really no such thing as Arhatship and Pratyekabuddhahood as final Buddhist goals. These were taught simply to encourage people. All capable of enlightenment, in achieving their aim, will eventually take the path of the Bodhisattva and progress to Perfect Buddhahood – including those who consider themselves to have attained already the goals of Arhatship and Pratyekabuddhahood. Much space in the *Lotus Sūtra* is taken up with the Buddha predicting how the great Arhats in his entourage, people like Śāriputra, the hero of the Ābhidharmikas, will eventually become Full Buddhas. Śāriputra had embarked on the Bodhisattva path aeons ago – he had just forgotten it. That is all.

There is some evidence from the *Lotus Sūtra* itself that there may have been persecution of those who insisted, perhaps with evangelical zeal, on shouting the new teachings at people who would rather not hear them. In one of the later sections of the sūtra we are told of the insistent Bodhisattva Sadāparibhūta, who would pounce on his fellow Buddhists with the words, 'I profoundly revere you all! I dare not hold you in contempt. What is the

reason? You are all treading the bodhisattva path, and shall succeed in becoming Buddhas!' The result was that some,

> reviled him with a foul mouth, saying, 'This know-nothing bhikṣu! Whence does he come? He himself says, "I do not hold you in contempt," yet he presumes to prophesy to us that we will succeed in becoming Buddhas! We have no need of such idle prophecies!' In this way, throughout the passage of many years, he was constantly subjected to abuse; yet he did not give way to anger, but constantly said, 'You shall become Buddhas!' When he spoke these words, some in the multitude would beat him with sticks and staves, with tiles and stones. He would run away and abide at a distance, yet he would still proclaim in a loud voice, 'I dare not hold you all in contempt. You shall all become Buddhas!'
>
> (Hurvitz 1976: 280–1)[16]

Skill-in-means and the doctrine of the One Vehicle form the subjects of the main parables for which the *Lotus Sūtra* is justly renowned. The first parable is that of the burning house. Summarized, it tells how three sons of a wealthy man are trapped inside a burning house while playing. So absorbed are they in their games that they are unaware of the fire. The father, well-trained in those skilful devices needed by all parents, resolves to persuade the children to come out by offering them various new playthings. They like playing in carriages drawn by animals. He offers them goat carriages, deer carriages, and ox carriages. The children cannot wait, and they rush into their father's arms. What does he now do? He gives them each a wonderful carriage, the very best, drawn by a white ox (Ch. 13). The parable requires little interpretation. The father is the Buddha. The burning house is the house of saṃsāra, within which sentient beings, absorbed in their playthings, are trapped. The Buddha offers various vehicles (*yānas*) as bribes, according to the tastes of sentient beings, but when they have taken up the practices and are (becoming) saved from saṃsāra at the appropriate point he gives them all the very best, the only, solitary One Vehicle of Buddhahood. The question is asked (*ibid.*: 60 ff.) whether the father, or the Buddha, lied to his children? He did not. The Buddha describes himself as the Father of Beings (*ibid.*: 61). He simply uses skill-in-means out of compassion in order to save his children. He acted out of compassion solely with the intention of saving them. They cannot complain. He has given them the very best.[17]

Elsewhere in the *Lotus Sūtra* we find a parable of the Prodigal Son, this time spoken not by the Buddha himself but by several of his overjoyed followers. A man's son has left home, wandered away, and fallen into dire poverty. Meanwhile his father's business by contrast has prospered in another city, and his father has become a very rich man. The son arrives one day at his father's house. While the son no longer recognizes his father or his new mansion, the father instantly recognizes his son and sends a servant to fetch him. The son, alas, is terrified. The father accordingly realizes that he must introduce him in gradual stages to the truth that he is the son of the father and heir to all this wealth. The father offers his son very menial and dirty work (attaining of Arhatship). He does the job well, and the father gradually promotes him. Eventually the father starts to treat him like a son. At long last

the father, about to die, announces to all that this man really is his son and natural heir. The son is, of course, overjoyed. The parable is obvious – as all good parables should be (Ch. 4).

The Buddha's teaching, again, is likened to the rain which pours down equally on all plants. This rain is nevertheless absorbed and used by each plant according to its nature (Ch. 5). This parable, well-known in East Asia, inspired a lovely Japanese poem by Shunzei (1114–1204):

> Spring's fine rain
> both in the distance and right here
> both on grasses and trees
> is evenly dyeing everything
> everywhere in its new green.
> (LaFleur 1983: 94)

The impact of the Buddha's teaching of universal Buddhahood is illustrated by the case of a poor man who fell asleep while drinking with a wealthy friend. The friend, having to leave, sewed a jewel into his poor friend's garment. The poor man eventually wanders off, to resume his life of poverty. When the two meet again the rich man is astonished. Why is his friend so poor when he has this jewel on his person? He is really wealthy. He can have all that he ever hoped for. Like this is the joy of discovering that one is really destined for Buddhahood (Ch. 8). The nature of Arhatship and Pratyekabuddhahood as goals is illustrated by the parable of the Place of Jewels (Ch. 7). The Buddha is like a guide leading people to the Place of Jewels, a fabulous Utopia, perhaps. The followers become tired and want to give up. The guide, however, is the best sort of guide – he is also a magician. He creates a magical city in which they can rest before going on to their true destination. Likewise the Buddha creates the magical city of Arhatship and Pratyekabuddhahood.[18]

This, therefore, is the principal message of the first half of the *Lotus Sūtra* – the Buddha's skill-in-means, the doctrine of the One Vehicle, and the complete joy of the Buddha's disciples in finding that they will, indeed they must, attain Perfect Buddhahood. There are in reality no such goals as Arhatship and Pratyekabuddhahood. While we are still in the first part of the *Lotus Sūtra* extraordinary events start to take place, events which foreshadow the equally shattering message of the second part of the sūtra. To the astonishment of the assembly the *Lotus* depicts the appearance of another Buddha, one from the past, previously unknown, called Prabhūtaratna (Ch. 11). This Buddha appears in midair inside a floating stūpa that had emerged from out of the earth. He had so admired the *Lotus Sūtra* that he vowed to be present whenever it is preached. We can see reflected here a number of assertions. First, the *Lotus Sūtra* is not new, but its preaching is part of the ministry of every Buddha. Second, there can be more than one Buddha existing at the same time and in the same region. Third, and this was the most radical implication of all, there is here a denial of a cardinal teaching found in non-Mahāyāna Buddhism, the teaching that the Buddha after his death, or apparent death (his final nirvāṇa), has gone completely beyond any further

recall or reference, has to all intents and purposes ceased as far as those who are left are concerned. For Prabhūtaratna is supposed to be dead, and yet here he is radiantly vigorous and apparently living inside his stūpa.

It is this teaching, the doctrine that the Buddha remains, has not abandoned his children but is still here helping them in many infinite compassionate ways, which forms the centrepiece of the *Lotus Sūtra*'s second half. The Buddha has not really died. He is like a great doctor whose sons have been poisoned. He quickly mixes the antidote, but the minds of some of the sons are so deranged that they ignore the medicine. The father fakes his own death and retires elsewhere. Brought to their senses by shock the sons take the antidote. The father then reappears. His very death itself was a skilful device (Ch. 16). The Buddha is still with us. Furthermore, the Buddha's life can be projected far into the past. In the sūtra the Buddha explains that he has converted countless individuals, many myriads of *koṭis* (i.e. a large number – the sūtras relish the breathless multiplication of immense figures). At this, Maitreya, the Bodhisattva who is for this world the coming Buddha, asks in astonishment how it can be that the Buddha teaches so many beings in the span of some forty years since his enlightenment (Hurvitz 1976: 234):

> In this way, since my attainment of Buddhahood it has been a very great interval of time. My life-span is incalculable asaṃkhyeyakalpas [rather a lot of aeons], ever enduring, never perishing. O good men! The life-span I achieved in my former treading of the bodhisattva path even now is not exhausted, for it is twice the above number. Yet even now, though in reality I am not to pass into extinction [enter final nirvāṇa], yet I proclaim that I am about to accept extinction. By resort to these expedient devices [this skill-in-means] the Thus Come One [the Tathāgata] teaches and converts the beings.
>
> (Hurvitz 1976: 239)

In East Asian Buddhism it is commonly taught that the Buddha of the *Lotus Sūtra* is eternal. However, there is a problem with the notion of an eternal Buddha. If the Buddha is eternal then no one who is not already a Buddha could attain Buddhahood. If the *Lotus Sūtra* taught an eternal Buddha it would accordingly destroy the notion that all will eventually attain Buddhahood – unless, that is, the *Lotus Sūtra* also held to a doctrine of the *tathāgatagarbha*. In China, particularly in the Tiantai tradition, the *Lotus Sūtra* was linked with the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra*, which, as we have seen, advocates the *tathāgatagarbha*, and also with the *Awakening of Faith*.

However, there is little or no evidence from the *Lotus Sūtra* itself that it consciously accepts the *tathāgatagarbha* teaching.[19] Thus I suspect that the East Asian doctrine of an eternal Buddha in the *Lotus Sūtra* results from the systematization of the teachings of the *Sūtra* within the context of Tiantai thought, which draws on other Mahāyāna material to equate the Buddha of the *Lotus Sūtra* with the ultimate truth and to teach a cosmic Buddha rather like the Mahāvairocana of Huayan Buddhism. The quotation above is apparently contradictory. It speaks of the Buddha attaining enlightenment in time, and seems to give a finite figure to the length of his subsequent life. Nevertheless, it also speaks of the Buddha's life as 'ever

enduring, never perishing'. In Buddhist theory it is commonly said that the length of a life is contingent upon merit. This is why the Buddha in the *Lotus Sūtra* speaks of the lifespan he has achieved through his many good deeds on the Bodhisattva path. Thus I suggest that the quotation above, in its Indian context, is to be taken as indicating an enormously long but still finite length to the Buddha's life. His life as a Buddha both begins and ends in time, and references to its eternity are typical examples of sūtra hyperbole. Nevertheless, whether the Buddha is literally eternal or not, the Buddha of the *Lotus Sūtra* is, as it were, religiously eternal – for any devotee he is always there.[20]

The feature of laudatory self-reference, a feature of many Mahāyāna sūtras, is also very much to the fore in the *Lotus Sūtra*. If a person hears just one verse of the sūtra and rejoices in it for even a moment the Buddha predicts that person to Full Buddhahood. The sūtra should not only be recited and promulgated but worshipped as if it were the Buddha himself with 'sundry offerings of flower perfume, necklaces, powdered incense, perfumed paste, burnt incense, silk canopies and banners, garments or music' (Hurvitz 1976: 174; cf. Chs 20–3). Moreover the demerit of maligning this sūtra and its preachers is much worse than constantly maligning the Buddha (*ibid.*: 175).[21] The *Lotus Sūtra* enjoins active missionary work in promulgating the sūtra and its teachings (Ch. 22). Those who preach the sūtra will themselves see the Buddha (*ibid.*: 180–2). If a person promulgates the sūtra even a little bit he or she will receive a favourable rebirth and be strikingly handsome – 'His teeth shall not be wide-spaced, yellow or black. His lips shall not be thick, pursed or thin. In short, he shall have no disagreeable features' (*ibid.*: 262). The preacher too is to be revered as a Buddha. If a person is ill and hears this sūtra he shall recover and neither grow old nor die (*ibid.*: 301). Many other miracles will accompany the sūtra's devotees. Their senses will all become perfect, indeed superhuman (Ch. 19). Divine young boys will come and minister to the sūtra's devotees. When the preacher preaches, if there are no human beings to hear then supernatural beings will arrive instead. The short Chapter 21 of the sūtra, detailing the great powers of the Buddha, was itself used in East Asia for magical protection. In East Asia there were many popular stories of miraculous happenings accompanying the *Lotus Sūtra*'s devotees.[22]

The magical power of the *Lotus Sūtra* has no doubt been one reason for its popularity. Another reason is the way in which the sūtra praises even a little act of faith and devotion as having apparently quite disproportionate results. If a person makes offerings to the Buddha's relic stūpas, if a child builds stūpas in play out of mud, if someone makes statues and worships them, or sponsors such activities, prostrates himself or herself, or even raises just one hand, if a person recites 'Adoration to the Buddha' just once, even with a distracted mind, that person is on the path to Buddhahood.[23] A great deal of devotion to the *Lotus Sūtra* has centred on the enormous benefits the sūtra itself predicts (very much greater than that produced by normal moral action such as giving alms) for those who copy, worship, read and recite or preach the sūtra. These are practices that everyone can share in, in one way or another, from lavish court productions to the devotions of ordinary peasants. The merit gained by individual, group, or sponsored performance can be transferred to the benefit of,

e.g., one's ancestors, or for one's own this-worldly as well as 'supramundane' goals, ranging from recovery from illness through to rebirth in a Pure Land or even (remotely) enlightenment.

The importance of Pure Land Buddhism in Japan, centred on rebirth in Sukhāvatī, the Pure Land of Amitābha or Amitāyus Buddha in the West, has meant that the few references to this land and Amitābha/Amitāyus in the *Lotus Sūtra* have tended to associate this sūtra in Japan with rebirth in the Pure Land.[24] It is noticeable that faith in the sūtra and its practices almost invariably entails a rebirth in the Pure Land according to the stories in the *Hokkegenki* (e.g. Dykstra 1983: 79). Moreover, the sūtra is said to be so powerful that it can save even the most incorrigible sinners. Chapter 12 of the *Lotus Sūtra*, probably the last major section to be interpolated into the text, tells how in a previous life the Buddha offered himself as a lifelong servant to someone who could preach to him the Mahāyāna. Eventually a hermit offered to preach the *Lotus Sūtra*. That hermit is in the present life none other than the Buddha's erring cousin, Devadatta. The evil Devadatta is in reality the Buddha's best friend. Thanks to Devadatta the Buddha has been able to practise throughout his lifetimes the various virtues, especially, perhaps, the virtue of patient endurance. Devadatta too is predicted to achieve future Buddhahood. In Japan the stated ability of the sūtra to save the wicked gave it a great advantage over many other sūtras. An evil priest participated in many non-Buddhist acts, such as hunting, fishing and eating meat. Nevertheless he regularly recited the *Lotus Sūtra* at night with great faith. He was accordingly reborn in the Pure Land.[25] A layman who regularly took part in hunting and all the other wickednesses of an active courtly life placed his entire hope in a passage of the Devadatta chapter which declared that he who has faith in the sūtra will avoid an unfortunate rebirth. During his final illness he repeatedly recited just this chapter. He too was reborn in the Pure Land (Dykstra 1983: 122–3). Even a robber, because of his devotion to the saving virtues of the great Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara (*Lotus*: Ch. 25; Hurvitz 1976), was protected from injury when attacked by forces of the law (*ibid.*: 132–3). The sūtra states that:

> . . . one might encounter royally ordained woes,
> Facing execution and the imminent end of one's life.
> By virtue of one's constant mindfulness of Sound-Observer [Avalokiteśvara]
> The knives would thereupon break in pieces,
> Or, one might be confined in a pillory,
> One's hands and one's feet in stocks.
> By virtue of mindfulness of Sound-Observer
> One would freely gain release.[26]

Not only are the wicked greatly encouraged by the *Lotus Sūtra*, but also that other group so often discriminated against in early Buddhist writings – women. In the same chapter of the sūtra in which Devadatta is predicted to Perfect Buddhahood, a nāga princess appears, barely eight years old. She has become an advanced Bodhisattva in a moment due to the preaching of Mañjuśrī, another great Bodhisattva. The monkish Śāriputra, in spite of the other miracles he has seen, is now really taken aback. How can such spiritual progress happen to

a female? With her supernatural power the Nāga princess before his very eyes is instantly transformed into a male and attains Buddhahood. True, in the *Lotus Sūtra* it does appear to be necessary that the girl becomes a male. Nevertheless in other Mahāyāna sūtras the situation is perhaps more to the modern taste. In a famous section of the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa Sūtra* a goddess, in order to demonstrate once more to Śāriputra that sex differences are all part of the realm of phenomenal illusion, transforms herself into a male and Śāriputra, to his panic, into a female. The poor monk was no doubt concerned about all the Vinaya rules that he was infringing in experiencing a female body.[27] Out of her compassion the goddess then returns them both to their conventional forms. We have seen already that the principal figure in the *Śrīmālā Sūtra* is a queen. Many Tibetans are deeply devoted to Tārā, who declared that she would always act in female form for the benefit of sentient beings (see Chapter 10 below).

The final feature of the *Lotus Sūtra* we must note, a feature which has been of some influence in East Asian Buddhist practice, is that of body-burning. Chapter 23 of the *Lotus Sūtra* recounts how the Bodhisattva Bhaiṣajyarāja in a previous life wished to make the most perfect offering to the Buddha. He accordingly offered his body by setting fire to it. The body burned for a very long time, and he was eventually reborn in a Pure Land: 'Good man this is called the prime gift' (Hurvitz 1976: 295). Supposing someone wishes to become enlightened:

> [I]f he can burn a finger or even a toe as an offering to a Buddha-stūpa, he shall exceed one who uses realm or walled city, wife or children, or even all the lands, mountains, forests, rivers, ponds, and sundry precious objects in the whole thousand-millionfold world as offerings.
>
> (Hurvitz 1976: 298)

In general in India people were used to the hyperbole of religious enthusiasm and may have taken such exhortations as a rhetorical exaggeration of the imperative to 'be unattached'. Alternatively, as we shall see in Chapter 10, they may well have seen such exceptionally brave, almost superhuman, Bodhisattva conduct as something they might be able to do in a future life if they begin now with more accessible practices. Nevertheless Chinese pilgrims to India do apparently describe cases where Buddhists engaged in mortifying the flesh and religious suicide, although further research may be necessary on these problematic texts before their evidence can be relied upon fully (Joshi 1967: 108–11). But we know it happened in East Asian Buddhism, where from the early fifth century CE burning joints or the whole body as an act of devotion was taken very seriously indeed.[28] James A. Benn's detailed study (2007a) shows that complete or partial self-immolation has been from quite early days in Chinese Buddhism to the present day by no means a minority or fringe activity. It has always been a serious religious option often accompanied, it is said, by miracles and sacred relics and with the power of converting others and encouraging them in their own religious striving.[29] As Benn observes (2007a: 190, 201, cf. 193), '[S]elf-immolation was a practice that cut across the whole of the *saṃgha* in China. From Chan monks, to scholars, to Pure Land believers, all kinds of monks and nuns found valid reasons for offering their bodies'; '[It] was an extremely

flexible and adaptable form of expedient means (*upāya*)'. Indeed it was not infrequently advocated and defended in a doctrinally sophisticated manner by learned and spiritually mature religious specialists such as the Chan master Yanshou (Yen-shou; 904–75). Other Chan masters were included among self-immolators (Benn 2007a: 154–7). The Huayan master Fazang himself is said to have burnt a finger off out of religious devotion. Burning fingers was a not-uncommon practice in Chinese Buddhist monasteries up to very recent times. Burning patches on the head, leaving visible scars, is part of Chinese Buddhist ordination ceremonies to the present day.[30] Holmes Welch tells of an informant who burnt one finger each year for four years in succession. Xuyun (Hsü-yün), a renowned and respected Chan abbot, burnt a finger off in 1897 out of filial piety, in order to help his mother who had died while bearing him, through transferring the merit thus obtained (Welch 1967: 324–5). The burning was apparently a spiritual experience; healing was very rapid.[31] In Japan, Jōshō burnt off a finger as a penance for accidentally touching a woman (Dykstra 1983: 66). In one Chinese account of complete self-immolation the monk concerned expressed a wish that his burning should be a slow one (on the model of the burning of Bhaiṣajyarāja) and continued to preach the Dharma while the flames slowly did their work. He declared to well-wishers that he felt 'quite cool and pleasant', and experienced no pain whatsoever.[32] Cases of complete self-immolation in Chinese Buddhism are by no means infrequent, and it is clear that it was sometimes undertaken by practitioners as the culmination of a lifetime of serious and devoted Buddhist practice. Several cases are recorded as recently as the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, while the *Hokkegenki* records stories of similar events in Japan. Accounts of engaging in such acts reflect among other things a strong dislike of the physical body as well as the attractions of a Pure Land or some other favourable after-death state.[33] While sometimes viewed with horror, or at least frowned upon, by Confucians and other Buddhists alike, self-immolation was an act also greatly admired even by its detractors for what it showed of bravery, religious devotion, and self-abnegation.[34] Relics of complete self-immolators were eagerly sought (Benn 2007a: 144–7, 168, cf. 180). Making donations on the occasion of a self-immolation might establish a karmic connection with someone who was sure to become a Buddha quickly (at least, more quickly than the donors; *ibid.*: 35).

The reader is reminded, perhaps, of the auto-cremation by Vietnamese monks in the 1960s. The Vietnamese immolations were primarily by way of a political gesture in an age of mass media rather than a direct attempt to offer devotion to the Buddhas.[35] Nevertheless, in the case of Bodhisattvas (or even aspirant-Bodhisattvas) it is difficult to separate out religious devotion from political gestures that are held to be for the benefit of the wider community. And the particular form of killing themselves, burning, was undoubtedly indicated by the age-old precedent of the *Lotus Sūtra*.[36]

A note on Tiantai (Tendai)

The Tiantai school is usually classed with Huayan as representing characteristically Chinese responses to Buddhism, its creative internalization. Although there are, of course,

detailed differences between the two schools, both are broadly similar in approach and tenet. Both are strongly syncretistic, both eventually created *panjiao* systems for ranking sūtras, culminating in the *Lotus Sūtra* for Tiantai and the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* for Huayan. Both schools stressed the doctrine of the One Mind, the universal Buddha-nature, and the one primeval Buddha who is equal to the universe. Both schools emphasized doctrines of interpenetration (as Tiantai puts it, there are 'three thousand realms in a single thought moment'), Sudden Enlightenment, and the presence of Truth in even the slightest things of everyday life. Tiantai was, however, the earlier of the two schools. Its great systematizer was Zhiyi, who was a contemporary of the Chinese Mādhyamika Jizang, and a century earlier than Fazang. Zhiyi chose to make his home on Mt Tiantai, hence the name of the school.[37]

For Zhiyi the final purpose of the Buddha coming into the world was to preach the *Lotus Sūtra*. This sūtra is both the highest and, since the Buddha talks in the sūtra about his imminent disappearance from view in apparent 'death', chronologically the final teaching of the Buddha.[38] One problem for those East Asian Buddhists who would treat the *Lotus Sūtra* as the final teaching of the Buddha, however, was the enormous popularity of the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra*, by definition the sūtra of the Buddha's last days. The Tiantai tradition, therefore, classed the two sūtras together in its *panjiao* schema of ranking. The final teaching is that of the *Lotus Sūtra*, but the Buddha preached the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* in order to stress his permanence for those who were too slow to grasp sufficiently the teaching of the *Lotus Sūtra* (Hurvitz 1963: 237 ff.). One result of this was to assimilate the *Lotus Sūtra*'s teaching of the Buddha and the ultimate universality of Buddhahood with the *Mahāparinirvāṇa* doctrine of the Buddha-nature. For Zhiyi the enormous figures for the Buddha's lifespan in the *Lotus* serve to indicate that in fact the True Buddha is eternal, beyond time and space altogether.[39] Tiantai accordingly makes a notional distinction between the Eternal Buddha (origin; the subject of the *Lotus Sūtra*'s second 14 chapters) and his manifestations for the benefit of beings (traces; found in the first 14 chapters). The former is occasionally referred to, with the Huayan or with the Japanese tantric tradition, as Vairocana or Mahāvairocana, while the latter is pre-eminently Śākyamuni. These are only notional distinctions, however. Actually Śākyamuni is none other than the Original Primeval Buddha (as are we all). All things interpenetrate.

As a result of the association of Tiantai with the Sui dynasty in China (581–618) the sect suffered a decline under the Tang corresponding to the increasing fortunes of Huayan. Tiantai all but ceased and most of its texts were lost due to the ninth-century persecution of Buddhism, and the tradition and its texts had to be reintroduced from Japan and Korea. The tradition had been introduced as a sect into Japan by Saichō (767–822), who travelled to China and studied at Mt Tiantai.[40] This introduction was in the face of considerable opposition from the older schools of Nara Buddhism, such as Kegon (Huayan). Alongside and sometimes contrasting with often unordained or irregularly ordained wandering 'holy men' (*hijiri*) and mountain ascetics, institutional Buddhism in Japan was from the beginning associated with the state and political/social activity. The monasteries were expected to devote considerable time to rituals for the protection of the state and for various this-worldly benefits. The

magical power of ritual and text was thus important. In exchange the state extended its carefully regulated toleration of the foreign religion and sometimes its considerable patronage. The close connection of Buddhist monasteries with politics caused frequent problems throughout Japanese history, however, and there is some reason to believe that the move of the capital from Nara eventually to Heian-kyō (Kyōto, hence the 'Heian Era') in 794 was in order to escape the influence of the overmighty prelates of aristocratic Nara Buddhism.[41] Saichō established the Tendai teachings at his small new temple on Mt Hiei. This mountain was very close to the new capital, and it was felt by the Nara sects that Saichō had perhaps influenced Emperor Kammu (Kanmu) in his decision on a site for the capital. Although Saichō had fled from what he saw as the corruption of Nara Buddhism, such was the connection between Japanese Buddhism and politics that his Tendai sect, perhaps as a counterbalance to Nara, received extensive patronage from the court. Saichō, an austere and virtuous monk, declared his monastery to be a Centre for the Protection of the Nation. His monks spent an intense period of 12 years studying on Mt Hiei, where moral perfection was seen as a vital part of the Buddhist path. On graduation, Saichō declared:

> Those who are capable in both action and speech shall remain permanently on the mountain as leaders of the order: these are the treasure of the nation. Those who are capable in speech but not in action shall be teachers of the nation, and those capable in action but not in speech shall be the functionaries of the nation.
>
> (de Bary *et al.* 1972: 286)

Among the functionaries, some would engage in agriculture and engineering works for the benefit of the populace. Like political involvement, the willingness of religious practitioners such as monks to engage in such activities stands in stark contrast with traditional Indian attitudes and is another important feature of Japanese Buddhism.[42]

By the time Nobunaga Oda (Japanese word order: Oda Nobunaga) burnt the monastery of Enryakuji on Mt Hiei in 1571 for siding with his enemies, it consisted of some 3,000 buildings and the monastery was extremely wealthy. Its history had also been extremely wild. During the second half of the tenth century a dispute within the Tendai tradition broke into armed hostility. Ryōgen the abbot, favoured by the court, is said to have organized a band of mercenaries in order to suppress his rivals. Soon monastic armies were being used against the government, and by the eleventh century it was not uncommon to send armed bands into the streets of Kyōto in order to enforce sectarian interests. These bands might take with them sacred objects, thus turning opposition into sacrilege. Emperor Shirakawa (1073–86) once complained that three things were beyond his control: the river's floods, the fortunes of gambling, and the monks of Mt Hiei (Eliot 1935: 246–7; Sansom 1958: 222–3, 270 ff.). During the thirteenth century the armed bands of Enryakuji apparently attacked the capital more than 20 times.

What are we to make of such events? Many Japanese saw them as a true sign that they were living in the final days of the Dharma, the era of total spiritual decline (Japanese: *mappō*). There is a temptation to see such depressing activities as purely secular matters of economics

and power politics, and therefore not the concern of Buddhism as such. This would be a mistake, however. The separation of religion from secular or material life is familiar in the modern world but is not at all a feature of the traditional Mahāyāna Buddhist worldview, particularly outside India. As we shall see when we examine the teaching of Nichiren, there is well-known and influential Mahāyāna sūtra material permitting killing if it promotes the interest of the Dharma – including killing those who slander the true Doctrine, and therefore, by a reasonable inference, one's own school or sect. According to the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* lay followers should take up arms to defend the monastic community.[43] In Japan in the early sixteenth century, after a debate between a Nichiren follower and a supporter of Tendai which, it is said, the Tendai follower lost, there was a five-day battle between over 30,000 Tendai temple warriors and some 20,000 troops supporting the Nichiren temples. This time Tendai won, and 21 Nichiren temples were completely destroyed.[44] At the end of the same century a Japanese invasion of Korea was repulsed by a Korean monk army led by the distinguished Sŏn (Chan/Zen) monk, Hyujŏng. This patriotic move led to a revival of the Sŏn tradition in Korea. Violence in defence of the Dharma has occurred not only in East Asia. According to cherished Tibetan tradition, the monk dPal gyi rdo rje (pronounced: Belgyi Dorjay) assassinated the king gLang dar ma in the mid-ninth century in order to save both the Dharma and the king from the consequences of persecuting Buddhism.[45] In Tibet in the seventeenth century the Fifth Dalai Lama (1617–82) noted in his autobiography that in response to opposition to his dGe lugs school the region of Beri should be destroyed by the Dalai Lama's Mongol allies, and his opponents should not be tolerated. For:

> [r]elying on that particular virtue which encompasses the bodhisattva – i.e., thinking of oneself and others in an equal manner – has not held back strife. Thus, though we might [continue] to act in accord with this sort of pretense, nothing other than shame before others would come of it.

Some years later, as ruler of Tibet, faced with rebellion, the Dalai Lama ordered 'for the sake of beings':

> [Of those in] the band of enemies who have despoiled the duties entrusted to them:
> Make the male lines like trees that have had their roots cut;
> Make the female lines like brooks that have dried up in winter;
> Make the children and grandchildren like eggs smashed against rocks;
> Make the servants and followers like heaps of grass consumed by fire;
> Make their dominion like a lamp whose oil has been exhausted;
> In short, annihilate any traces of them, even their names.[46]

Thus although among the motivations for violence there may have been political and economic factors we cannot conclude that the violence by its very nature had nothing to do with religious concerns and was contrary to the teaching and spirit of Buddhism. The prosperity of one's own sect or school was seen as very definitely a religious matter. We may

not always like the fact that Mahāyāna Buddhism permits killing, but the texts are there and are as much part of Buddhism as a historical phenomenon as are the acts themselves.

Nichiren Shōnin and his tradition

In Anglo-Saxon England it was widely felt that the year 1000 CE would usher in the end of the world and the Second Coming of Christ. In Japan at about the same time numerous disasters and moral decline indicated that the era of *mappō* had begun, the era of the Last Days, the final [days of the] Dharma. This era is characterized in the scriptures as an age when the true spirit of the Dharma has become extinct. The late Heian period saw military monks, moral bankruptcy, imperial weakness, revolts and vicious feudal warfare.[47] There was widespread confidence that such events indicated *mappō* had begun, although some uncertainty concerning when exactly it had done so. Many Japanese identified the beginning of *mappō* with the burning of the temple of Chōkokuji in 1052. Nichiren, however, seems to have thought of it as beginning in 1034. Shinran, on the other hand, calculated that 1224 was the 683rd year of *mappō*.[48] Be that as it may, Japanese religiosity after this time can only be understood in the context of one overriding problem – how can someone be a Buddhist, how is the Buddhist religion to survive, during the Last Days? For this is the era of cosmic and religious disaster when apparently none of the normal sources for religious inspiration can be relied upon.[49]

The period which followed that of the Heian is known as the Kamakura (1185–1333), once more named after a town, this time some 300 miles east of Kyōto and its negative enfeebling influences. Kamakura was chosen as its base by the Minamotos, short-lived victors in the warfare which characterized the fall of Heian. Contrary to what one might expect, perhaps, the theory of *mappō* was a creative influence on the Buddhism of the Kamakura period, as it sought to find a basis for personal and societal religious harmony and solace. On the one hand, we find the simple faith of devotion to the Buddha Amitābha and his all-embracing, all-helping compassion developed by Hōnen (1133–1212) and his disciple Shinran (1173–1262). On the other, Dōgen returned from China with his austere Sōtō Zen, stressing personal inner cultivation stripped of necessary reliance on outer elements.

Nichiren's solution to the problems of the age was, however, rather different.[50] Nichiren was a prophet. Basing himself on the *Lotus Sūtra* he fiercely and fearlessly denounced the errors of his day, including those of all other sects, and called on the government to implement the Truth, suppressing deviant doctrine and establishing Japan as the Land of Truth, the *Lotus Sūtra*, under the emperor in Kyōto. This Truth would subsequently spread from Japan to embrace the whole world, reversing spiritual decline and ushering in the Pure Land of Śākyamuni Buddha on this very earth.

Nichiren was born in 1222. He came from a poor background, and became a novice monk at the age of 11. He studied Tendai on Mt Hiei, and then all the other Buddhist sects in Japan at that time. He was extremely well-read in the scriptures. Even those scholars who disagreed with him – and he was very unpopular – admitted Nichiren's learning. Nichiren

was not a ranter but a skilled 'theologian' who could support his views with reasoned argument and, most importantly, scriptural testimony.

The initial results of Nichiren's study are contained in his famous essay *On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land* (*Risshō Ankoku Ron*). This treatise was presented by Nichiren in 1260 to the Hōjōs, who had taken over from the Minamotos as the dominant power in the land, and contains many of the elements of Nichiren's style and teaching. It is in the form of a dialogue between a traveller and Nichiren himself, the Master. Why is the world in such a terrible state, the traveller asks?

> In recent years, there have been unusual disturbances in the heavens, strange occurrences on earth, famine and pestilence, all affecting every corner of the empire and spreading throughout the land. Oxen and horses lie dead in the streets, and the bones of the stricken crown the highways. Over half the population has already been carried off by death, and there is hardly a single person who does not grieve. . . . The three treasures of Buddhism continue to exist . . . why is it that the world has already fallen into decline and that the laws of the state have come to an end? What is wrong? What error has been committed?
> (Gosho Translation Committee 2003: 6–7)

The answer, according to Nichiren, is that people are so evil that all the benevolent protector deities have left the country and been replaced by demons. Japan is literally a country possessed. This is indeed what the scriptures say. Nichiren can refer to a chapter of the *Suvarṇabhāsottama* (*Golden Light*) *Sūtra* for example, a particularly popular sūtra in Japan partly because of its political comments on the role of kingship. In this sūtra the Four Great Divine Kings describe how they will forsake a country where the sūtra is not upheld and evil is done. Terrible disasters will follow as a result.[51] In this and other sūtras the causes of these disasters are delineated. People are following false gods or, to be more precise, false or at the least inferior sūtras. In China too, Nichiren observes, invasions and other disasters occurred when the emperor attacked Buddhism. In particular, Hōnen's sect centred on devotion to Amitābha is singled out for merciless criticism. Subsequently Nichiren referred to the Amitābha practice as leading to the lowest (Avīci) hell, the Zen practitioners as the devils, the Shingon (tantric) sect as a force which 'ruins the country', the Ritsu sect, a sect concerned with the study and correct observance of the Vinaya, as 'the traitor to the country', and Tendai as 'an outdated calendar'.[52] Nichiren drew an exact parallel between the situation within Buddhism and that in Japan itself. Just as in Japan there were many trying to govern, while true rulership lay in the emperor, in Buddhism there were many rival Buddhas and sūtras, each championed by a different sect, while the true Buddha is the eternal Śākyamuni Buddha of the *Lotus Sūtra* and the final and highest teaching that of the *Lotus Sūtra* itself.[53] Deviation from this truth had in both cases led to disaster. There should be one emperor and one Buddha. As Nichiren puts it elsewhere:

> Although every individual tries to get ahead of all others, yet the Sovereign must be one; if two Kings co-exist in one country there cannot be peace; if there are two masters in

> one home, then family dissensions will break out. It is not otherwise in Buddhism. Apart from what it is, one Scripture must be the great King of all Buddhist Scriptures.
>
> (Petzold 1977: 49–50)

Since the country's disasters came from upholding false teachings, it is the duty of the government to suppress false doctrines. Nichiren recognizes that some Buddhists may find this conclusion unpalatable, but it is clearly stated in the sūtras. In the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* the Buddha describes how as a Bodhisattva in a previous life he killed several Brahmins to prevent them from slandering Buddhism, and to save them in his compassion from the punishment they might otherwise have incurred through continuing their slander. In the same sūtra it is said that the followers of the Mahāyāna ought to keep weapons and ignore the moral code if such is necessary in order to protect the True Dharma and the pure monastic order. In the *Gaṇḍavyūha Sūtra* one of Sudhana's 'Good Friends', king Anala, is 'said to have made killing into a divine service' in order to reform people through punishment.[54] True, according to Asaṅga, and also Fazang, only a very great Bodhisattva can so discard the normal moral code. Nichiren, however, considered himself to be a great Bodhisattva, and suppression of errors was necessary in the age of *mappō* in order to protect the people from disaster.[55] There is some dispute as to whether Nichiren thought it was necessary at that time actually to kill 'heretics'. He seems rather to imply that the government should institute withdrawal of lay support, thus starving the miscreants in order to bring them to the Truth (Petzold 1977: 77). However, Nichiren undoubtedly sanctioned fighting by his followers in a just cause: 'In this life you are participating in the life of the "furious spirits", and yet you will surely be born in Buddha's land after death' (*ibid.*: 83). Scriptural support for killing was used not only in Japan. Every enthusiast for the martial arts has heard of the Chinese Buddhist 'warrior monks' of Shaolin.[56] The Chinese Communists were able through such justification to collect money from Chinese Buddhists for a fighter aircraft named *Chinese Buddhist*, used against the American 'demons' in Korea.[57] As Demiéville points out, it is indeed a paradox that Mahāyāna Buddhism, in making the moral code flexible in the interests of compassion, ends up justifying killing to an extent far greater than Mainstream Buddhism.

Disasters, Nichiren said, will continue until Truth is followed and propagated. That is inevitable, since in failing to follow the Truth not only is the karmic recompense considerable but also any mind out of conformity with the true way of things is bound to suffer and a country or world thus out of conformity will become a world of great suffering too. Indeed there are further disasters still to come, particularly foreign invasion. The subsequent attempted invasion of Japan by the Mongols under Kublai Khan may have suggested to some that Nichiren be taken a little more seriously. Prior to that, however, he had been injured in a mob attack, very nearly executed (saved, it is said, by divine intervention), and exiled twice. He died, still taken seriously by very few, in 1282.

For Nichiren, in the era of *mappō* one can be saved only through faith in the *Lotus Sūtra*. According to Nichiren's teaching the *Lotus Sūtra* is perfect, the final truth; in the age of *mappō*

people require a simple teaching; the age of *mappō* is indeed the time to proclaim this teaching of the *Lotus*; Japan is the country where it should be proclaimed and from which it will spread over all the world; and all other systems already established in Japan have done their allotted task in preparing the way for this final teaching, and must now give way to it. The content of Nichiren's *Lotus Sūtra* teaching is contained in his Three Great Secret Laws. These are, in Japanese, *honzon* (or *gohonzon*), *daimoku*, and *kaidan*.

The term *honzon* refers to the focus or chief object of reverence in Nichiren's system. For Nichiren *the* Buddha is Śākyamuni, the eternal Buddha that can be derived from the *Lotus Sūtra*. For this reason the actual final teaching is contained not in the *Lotus Sūtra* in its entirety but rather in those sections of the second part of the sūtra which deal with the cosmic Buddha Śākyamuni. This Buddha, and hence the final Truth itself, is therefore the primary object of reverence. However, the actual physical *honzon* is a *mandara* (derived from the Sanskrit: *maṇḍala*). In Japanese Buddhism this is 'a devotional object on which Buddhas and bodhisattvas are depicted or on which a doctrine is expressed. . . . [For many Japanese Buddhist schools it is] the embodiment of enlightenment or truth' (English Buddhist Dictionary Committee 2002: 390–1). Here the *honzon* is a *mandara* centred on Śākyamuni as the primordial Buddha, designed by Nichiren in 1279 and based on the *Lotus Sūtra*. In the centre is the formula *Namu Myō hō renge kyō* – Adoration (or Reverence) to the *Lotus Sūtra*. Around it are written the names of the cardinal directions, Śākyamuni, Prabhūtaratna, the assembly of other beings who appear in the *Lotus Sūtra*, and those who represent the true lineage of the teachings, each in its appropriate position. In Nichiren Shōshū the name of Nichiren is also given a prominent place.[58] The *honzon* is thus an abstract representation of the totality since, with Tendai, Śākyamuni as the eternal Buddha is also the cosmic Buddha.

Daimoku refers to the formula *Namu* (in some Nichiren traditions chanted as *Nam*) *Myō hō renge kyō*, or its actual faith-filled chanting, often accompanied by a rhythmic beat on a drum.[59] The title of the *Lotus Sūtra* (*Myō hō renge kyō*), in accordance with Zhiyi's commentary, is considered to contain all that follows in seed. Indeed, for Nichiren it is the essence of all the teachings of the Buddha, and is the very Buddha-nature itself, that through the identity of subject and object is awakened (realized, or manifested) in the practitioner when he or she chants. As the Buddha-nature, the title of the *Lotus Sūtra* is hence also the eternal primordial Buddha, Śākyamuni. According to Nichiren, to utter this title with faith is enough to save one from hell and will itself lead to perfection:

> Shakyamuni Buddha who attained enlightenment countless kalpas ago, the Lotus Sutra that leads all people to Buddhahood, and we ordinary human beings are in no way different or separate from one another. To chant Myoho-renge-kyo with this realization is to inherit the ultimate Law of life and death. This is a matter of the utmost importance for Nichiren's disciples and lay supporters, and this is what it means to embrace the Lotus Sutra.
>
> (Gosho Translation Committee 2003: 216)

For Nichiren this phrase is more profitable than the entire text of the *Sūtra*. Chanting this title is the practice for the period of *mappō*, and is the highest practice of Buddhism. Just

as deserting the Truth leads to personal and national disasters, transforming the mind through the practice of Buddhism – specifically, the practice of chanting the name of the *Lotus Sūtra* – can transform this very world into the Buddha Land. To quote from a Nichiren scholar, Gyōkei Umada:

> When a man gazes at the Maṇḍala and recites the Sacred Title, heart and soul, subjectivity and objectivity become fused into one whole, and the worshipper realizes in himself the excellent qualities of the Supreme Being, and thereby his short life is made eternal and his limited virtue infinite . . . herein lies the consummation of the creed of the Nichiren Sect: the peace of mind of all believers and religious life. The result of all this is the realization of the Buddha Land in the present state of existence.
>
> (Quoted in Petzold 1977: 36–7)

Finally, the *kaidan* is the place for receiving the moral precepts, or the place of ordination. The interpretation of this varies from subsect to subsect. In a general sense it seems to refer to the Buddha Land made manifest through the practice of the *Lotus Sūtra*. More specifically, the *kaidan* can be the place in a believer's home where the *honzon* is set up and regularly worshipped. It could also be a central place of initiation into the sect. But Nichiren speaks as well of the *kaidan* as if it were a secret spot within one's own heart, as well as the place where in the future, with the establishment of Truth the world over (Japanese: *kōsen-rufu*) and the consequent ushering in of peace, happiness and prosperity, an enormous initiation hall for all people will be erected, apparently in Japan:

> Then the golden age . . . will be realized in these days of degeneration and corruption. . . . Then the establishment of the Holy See will be completed, by imperial grant and the edict of the Dictator, at a spot comparable in its excellence with the Paradise of the Vulture Peak [where Śākyamuni preached the Mahāyāna sūtras]. We have only to wait for the coming of the time.
>
> (Anesaki, in Petzold 1977: 64–5)

Like all good prophets, Nichiren was persecuted, and made a virtue of suffering. A number of his followers over the years have been martyred for their unyielding opposition to Falsehood.[60] Nichiren was fond of identifying himself with the persistently persecuted Bodhisattva Sadāparibhūta of the *Lotus Sūtra*, and he saw the *Sūtra*'s descriptions of difficulties and persecutions faced by its advocates as prophecies of his own experiences and those of his followers.[61] In his later years his attention was particularly drawn to Chapter 15 of the sūtra, where the Buddha according to Nichiren entrusted the *Lotus Sūtra* (or its title) to a certain old man named Viśiṣṭacāritra, who would be chief of the Bodhisattvas who would propagate the *Lotus Sūtra* during the era of *mappō*. The general view is that Nichiren saw the references to Viśiṣṭacāritra as a prophecy concerning himself, and identified himself with the reincarnation of Viśiṣṭacāritra. At least, this is the way Nichiren has been understood by his later followers. Certainly, Nichiren did see himself as something rather special by virtue of his propagation of the *Lotus*, the highest teaching, at that time:

> [T]hose who propagate the Lotus of Truth are indeed the parents of all men living in Japan. . . . I, Nichiren, am the master and lord of the sovereign, as well as of all the Buddhists of other schools. Notwithstanding this, the rulers and the people treat us thus maliciously.[62]

The prophet Nichiren goes on to warn them that the Mongols are coming to chastise the people for their infidelity. The truth of his prophecy will prove the authenticity of his teaching and mission.

The Nichiren tradition has shown distinctly fissiparous tendencies. After Nichiren's death a number of subsects arose. In Nichiren Shōshū Nichiren is now himself seen as the Buddha of the *mappō* era. This has led inevitably to a supramundane Nichiren who turns out to be identical with the eternal cosmic Buddha of the *Lotus Sūtra*. In a way, Śākyamuni begins once more to lose significance.

In the modern world the Nichiren tradition has been particularly influential through its lay movements. Originally associated with Nichiren Shōshū is Sōka Gakkai, a powerful lay Buddhist organization well known in the West particularly through the works of its president, Daisaku Ikeda. It is closely involved in politics, and was at one time directly connected with Kōmeitō, the Clean Government Party. In the past Kōmeitō had considerable electoral success (it describes itself as a 'middle of the road' party), although direct connection with Sōka Gakkai was severed in 1970 following a minor scandal. Sōka Gakkai is a prosperous organization with a large following in Japan, although it has sometimes been criticized in particular for its practice of *shakubuku*. Originally developed by Nichiren as a direct and forthright ('prophetic') way of teaching the final truth of the *Lotus Sūtra* by confrontationally cutting attachment to other provisional Buddhist teachings, in its modern form *shakubuku* has occasionally become in practice a rather fierce form of gaining converts through what appears to be a form of emotional and verbal bludgeoning.[63] Sōka Gakkai was affiliated to Nichiren Shōshū until 1991, when it was deaffiliated by the latter's then (67th) chief priest. Daisaku Ikeda was excommunicated from Nichiren Shōshū in 1992.

Of some interest also is the Nipponzan Myōhōji. This sect was founded early in the twentieth century, and was originally, like so many Nichiren sects, strongly nationalistic (Japan as a basis for world conversion) and keenly backed Japan's aggressive military expansion.[64] The founder, Nichidatsu Fuji, however, became a radical pacifist as a result of the devastation wrought by the Second World War. Nipponzan Myōhōji has spread throughout Asia, and has temples in India. As part of its campaign for world peace it has financed the construction of stūpas, 'peace pagodas', across the world, including two in England, one at Milton Keynes in Buckinghamshire, and one in London. Followers of Nipponzan Myōhōji are active at peace demonstrations, beating drums and chanting adoration to the name of the *Lotus Sūtra*.

Another modern Japanese lay movement which originates from Nichiren's teachings is the Risshō Kōsei Kai. Works in English by the president, Nikkyō Niwano, particularly commentaries on the *Lotus Sūtra*, are well known. In 1965 President Niwanō visited Pope Paul VI and attended the opening of the Fourth Session of the Second Vatican Council. Risshō

Kōsei Kai and Sōka Gakkai, in common with a number of other modern Japanese Buddhist movements, stress the lay element in Mahāyāna Buddhism, group therapy, and the way in which the practice of Buddhism can improve one's material and spiritual welfare in this life. They see Buddhist practice as involving active missionary propagation through conversion, and definite social benefits, and are also very active in educational, humanitarian and welfare activities. Nichiren's Buddhism forms a framework in the modern world for direct socio-political engagement. All these are inspired by Nichiren's idea of transforming this very world into a Buddha Land through the practice of the *Lotus Sūtra*. According to Nikkyō Niwano, to bring a person into the [Buddhist] Way is to raise up humanity, and is perhaps the only way to create a 'truly ideal society' (Niwano 1981: 42). Since mind and matter are connected, so changing the mind through Buddhism inevitably affects the material surroundings and thence prosperity:

> [T]here is nothing odd about a person who has through faith undergone a change of heart, a change in his or her way of thinking, having the blessings of money or other material things come his or her way. . . . [I]mprovement and change for the better are natural consequences.
>
> (Niwano 1981: 125–6)

Eventually all will arrive at the one teaching, and all will live according to the doctrine of the Buddha. This will be, in a sense, the Pure Land (*ibid.*: 135–6). Or, as it is put in Sōka Gakkai:

> To become Buddha means to live everywhere a joyous pleasant life, from the moment you get up in the morning to the time you go to sleep in the evening. To call a life happy and pleasant, when it is without clothing or money, with sickness in the home and debt collectors at the door – that is of no use.
>
> (Quoted by Dumoulin 1976: 263)

Such a teaching obviously harmonizes with the pressing needs of Japan's postwar reconstruction and economic growth. How easily it harmonizes with Buddhism (including Mahāyāna Buddhism) as it has existed in history, and particularly as it existed in India, is, however, a moot point.

8 *On the bodies of the Buddha*

Prolegomenon to the Mahāyāna

There is a Zen saying that if one meets the Buddha on the road one should kill him. It is tempting to see this as a further Japanese exhortation to holy violence, but the lesson is inspired, perhaps, by yet another sūtra, contained in the *Ratnakūṭa* collection. In this sūtra a group of virtuous Bodhisattvas are depressed at the thought that no matter how moral they are in this life their spiritual progress will be hindered by the immoral deeds they did during their infinite past lives, 'killing their fathers, mothers or Arhats; destroying Buddhist temples or stūpas; or disrupting the Saṃgha'. As a skilful means in order to help these Bodhisattvas let go of the conception of Self which is at the root of their spiritual anguish, Mañjuśrī, the Bodhisattva particularly associated with wisdom, took up a sharp sword and lunged towards the Buddha with the intention of killing him. The sword is Mañjuśrī's sword of wisdom, his principal iconographic feature in Buddhist art. The Buddha deflected this apparently murderous intent. The point of the lesson was, it seems, two-fold. First, the Buddha who appears before the assembly is empty of intrinsic existence, and he is thus truly 'killed' when he is seen this way. Second, since not just the Buddha but all things lack intrinsic existence, if the Bodhisattvas can gain an insight into emptiness, their past wicked deeds can be understood as ultimately illusory and no real barrier to spiritual progress. Recognizing the moral dangers of this teaching, the sūtra adds that those in the assembly whose spiritual progress was mediocre, through the Buddha's power, failed to see Mañjuśrī with his sword and hear the Buddha's teaching on the subject.[1]

Supposing you met the Buddha on the road (and restrained any homicidal tendencies), who or what exactly would you meet? Certainly the Buddha would appear as a physical human being clad in a monk's robe. And yet he would not be simply another monk. He would have a special impact by virtue of what he had attained, by virtue of his not being just another human being but rather a Buddha:

> His peaceful countenance was neither happy nor sad. He seemed to be smiling gently inwardly. With a secret smile, not unlike that of a healthy child, he walked along, peacefully, quietly. He wore his gown and walked along exactly like the other monks,

> but his face and his step, his peaceful downward glance, his peaceful downward-hanging hand, and every finger of his hand spoke of peace, spoke of completeness, sought nothing, imitated nothing, reflected a continuous quiet, an unfading light, an invulnerable peace.
>
> (Hesse 1951: 22)

In two ways, it seems to me, the Buddha as a *Buddha* extends beyond the physical human being. On the one hand he is not an isolated individual in history (now long dead) but rather exemplifies in his own person the Truth which he has discovered. There is a saying often repeated in Buddhist texts that whether a Buddha appears or does not appear the true nature of things remains for ever. There is a sense in which the Buddha as a physical human being exemplifies this true nature of things not in the sense that he created it, or it only exists in him, but rather in the sense that it exists as *realized* in him, and therefore is transmitted as realization through him to others. Second, in the context of meditative attainment and therefore magical intervention, the physical Buddha met on the road through his attainments can render all about him, and himself, other than they appear to be. He is a being of power, a master of magical transformations. He can create 'mind-made' bodies of himself to visit other realms, and be in more than one place at the same time. He can see things at a great distance; he can read minds.

Thus the Buddha we meet has three dimensions – his physical presence as a saffron-robed monk, his exemplification of the true nature of things which entails that he is truly free, an enlightened being, and his compassionate ability and desire to engage in magical interventions for the benefit of others, his occupation of the fluid quicksilver world of magic which we saw when examining the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*. These three dimensions indicate the incarnation of perfect wisdom (knowing the true nature of things) and compassion (magical intervention), the two definitive constituents of Buddhahood, in the physical body of the monk whom we have been fortunate enough to meet.

However, we become enlightened not through our encounter with the Buddha as such but through following his teachings until we embody them in our own physical presence. The Buddha's physical body, and also his magical interventions, are tools subservient to the cognition by others of the Truth. Thus with our sharp sword of wisdom we 'kill' the physical Buddha, we go beyond the physical to the true nature which he incarnates and exemplifies. Viewed in this perspective, of course, the actual physical death of the Buddha, the Enlightened One, was no insurmountable tragedy providing his teachings and their application remain.

There seems no reason to doubt that Śākyamuni Buddha, Siddhārtha Gautama, was a being who lived and died in India at a particular time in history. His influence on his followers was presumably deep and life-transforming, although his wider influence during his lifetime on the areas of north India where he lived and preached was perhaps slight. It is tempting to think that over a period of centuries, following the death of the Master,

Śākyamuni's grieving followers, losing sight of the historical individual, gradually deified the Buddha until he took his place alongside the teeming myriads of India's other gods and goddesses. This process by which a historical individual is deified is one of seeing him as more than he really was. It is a process of exaggeration and exaggerated reverence. It is essentially a process of falsification, the creation of a massive delusion.

Such a model is, I think, misleading. The Buddha was never seen as simply an ordinary human being by any Buddhist tradition.[2] He always embodies our three dimensions – physical, 'spiritual' (for want of a better word; exemplifying the true nature of things), and magical. If after the Buddha's death interest shifts from the physical to the spiritual and magical (eventually embracing also the Buddha seen in the visions of meditative absorption) this is only natural and embodies a change of emphasis rather than growing falsification. Moreover, the image of deification is apt to convey for Western readers a radical de-(or super-)humanization which is misleading in the Indian context. Divinization, investing a being with divine attributes, was common in Ancient India, and by no means carried with it the dramatic implications which are assumed in a monotheistic culture – that the being divinized enters a radically different order from common humanity. As A. L. Basham has put it, 'Divinity was cheap in ancient India' (Basham 1967: 88). The king, Brahmins, holy ascetics, and cows were referred to as gods (or goddesses). According to certain of the law books, gold and clarified butter were also gods. Trees could be gods, and a god dwelt in the hearth of every home as Agni, the Fire. It was natural to refer to the Buddha in terms also used of gods. Such indicated little more than an attitude of deep respect and humility on the part of his followers. In a world which lacks the rigid dichotomy of sacred from profane, God from Creation, where the borders between divine and human are fluid, so there was never any question of anyone referring to Siddhārtha Gautama, once he had become the Buddha, the Enlightened One, as merely another human being. Nevertheless, the Buddha had discovered truths unknown to the Brahmin priests and their gods. In a Buddhist cosmos where human beings through virtuous deeds can become gods, and gods through the exhaustion of their merit fall to the deepest hells, the Buddha had gone beyond the cycle of transmigration, beyond gods and humans. No matter whether he is referred to out of respect as having certain divine attributes, as a Buddha, an enlightened being, he is set over and against both gods and human beings. Even in the Theravāda tradition, where perhaps the human aspects of the Buddha are most prominent, the Lord denies that he is a man or a god. Rather, he is a Buddha, as were all the Buddhas before him, and those who will come after.

The word *kāya*, usually translated as 'body', is a systematically ambiguous word in Pali and Sanskrit. This ambiguity is an important part of its range of uses in the Buddhist treatment of the Buddha himself. In the fifth century CE the Theravāda commentator Buddhaghosa explained that the word could be used to refer in particular to a body, or to any group.[3] Thus the word *kāya* when used of the Buddha can refer to his actual body, primarily the physical body, and also to any group or collection of elements which make up or in some sense pertain to the Buddha.[4]

Throughout the Buddhist world the minimum for becoming a Buddhist is to 'take refuge' firmly and from the depth of one's heart in the Buddha, his Doctrine, and the Community. But what exactly is one taking refuge in when one takes refuge in the Buddha? This question was posed in particular by one of the traditions of Buddhism not in itself specifically Mahāyāna, the Sarvāstivāda (Vaibhāṣika). A person should not take refuge in the physical body of the Buddha, it was argued, since the physical body is after all impure.[5] Moreover, the physical body of the Buddha – although endowed with the 80 minor marks, such as copper-coloured, glossy and prominent nails, and the 32 major marks, e.g. soft skin, wheel marks on the soles of the feet, white hair between the eyebrows, and possessing a halo which extends a considerable distance that prevents dust and insects coming near him, and also having immeasurable physical strength – is still not the characterizing feature of a Buddha.[6] The Sarvāstivāda tradition holds that the Buddha through his magic power, his magical transformations, can manifest created or fictitious bodies as and where he pleases, but one could scarcely see these as the object of the Buddha Refuge. Rather, when we take refuge in the Buddha so we take refuge in his enlightenment and his Dharma-body, his *dharmakāya*. The word '*dharma*' in *dharmakāya* refers here to *dharmas*, the ultimates which form the subject matter of the Abhidharma. The *dharmakāya* is that which characterizes the Buddha as Buddha, that is, the collection (*kāya*) of pure elements (*dharmas*) possessed according to the Sarvāstivāda tradition exclusively (at least in their highest degree) by the Buddha. These are described as the 10 powers of penetrating awareness, the four kinds of intrepidity or fearlessness, the three foundations of mindfulness, and great compassion (*mahākaruṇā*).[7] They are said to be pure because they are without any admixture of moral and cognitive taints. One takes refuge in the Buddha's *dharmakāya* in the same way that one might respect a monk, not because he is a physical being as such but because he possesses the qualities of a monk.[8] The Buddha's Dharma-body is thus the flow of Buddha-qualities, and in taking refuge in the Buddha one takes refuge in just this *dharmakāya*, those qualities which the Buddha's doctrine sets forth and teaches. The *dharmakāya* is here set over and against the mere physical body of the Buddha. It is that which the Buddha is setting forth for his followers. The Mahāyāna stress on the *dharmakāya* is in its origins not a radical metaphysical departure, or a simple case of deification, but a continuation of this trend. It is a stress on the centrality of what it is that uniquely makes a Buddha a Buddha. In time it becomes oriented towards the final Truth itself, as cognized in a Buddha's direct unmediated gnosis (*jñāna*).

The Mahāyāna treatment of the Buddha's physical body, on the other hand, in terms of our tripartite model stresses more and more the magical dimension of the Buddha's being, a response to the apparent physical death of Siddhārtha Gautama on the one hand, and an encounter with the Buddhas of visionary experience on the other. Physical becomes magical transformation – an unsurprising development given the philosophy of both Mādhyamika and Yogācāra. One impetus for this treatment of the Buddha's physical body lay perhaps with the supramundane teachings of the Mahāsāṃghikas, which we examined in the first chapter.

The bodies of the Buddha and the philosophy of emptiness

Paul Harrison (1992b) has suggested that in early and even relatively late Mahāyāna sūtra literature in India, such as the Prajñāpāramitā and the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra*, the idea of the *dharmakāya* was not one of any kind of metaphysical or cosmic ultimate. It was not a 'unitary cosmic principle'. It rather preserved the notion we have found in non-Mahāyāna sources of this body – according to texts the highest and most important body of the Buddha – as either the 'body of [his] doctrine', his teachings (Dharma), or the 'body of *dharmas*'. In the latter sense, that also of the Sarvāstivāda, the *dharmakāya* refers to those factors (*dharmas*) the possession of which serves to distinguish a Buddha from one who is not a Buddha. Commonly in these sources, Harrison argues, the expression *dharmakāya* should be taken adjectivally – truly, really, the Buddha is possessed of a body of Dharma, his teachings, or perhaps a body of *dharmas*, his Buddha-qualities. Thus it is possible to contrast the actual physical body of the Buddha – which has now passed away and anyway always was just a physical body with all its physical frailties – with the Buddha's true body. This true body is either his teachings (Dharma, his Doctrine), that remain and lead to enlightenment, or the qualities the possession of which to their fullest degree made him a Buddha and that can still be attained by his followers. These are the *true* body of the Buddha. And of course the Buddha's true body has not passed away but still remains.

Harrison's view certainly reflects that of the earlier Perfection of Wisdom literature. The extant Sanskrit text of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā* (8,000-verse) Perfection of Wisdom sūtra makes a clear distinction between the physical body of the Buddha (*rūpakāya*) and his *dharmakāya*. Those who represent the Buddha through his physical attributes are described as foolish, '[b]ecause a *Tathāgata* is not to be seen through his physical body; *Tathāgata*s have the *dharma* as their body [*dharmakāyās tathāgatāḥ*]' (Harrison 1992b: 51–2, correcting Conze 1973a: 291). The contrast of the Buddha's physical form with his *dharmakāya*, to the disparagement of the former, was a practical, we might say institutional, as well as a doctrinal move. Those who would oppose the 'innovations' of the Mahāyāna, the introduction of teachings not taught by the 'historical' Buddha, were thereby accused of adhering with unjustifiable rigidity to the physical Buddha rather than to the *dharmakāya* which it was sometimes suggested the Buddha himself had said would lead the Community after his death. Moreover, it is argued in an article by Yuichi Kajiyama that a particular concern of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā* was the criticism of stūpa worship. Reverence of the physical body of the Buddha in the centuries after the death of the Lord was equivalent to worshipping the stūpas containing the Buddha's relics. Disparagement and devaluation of the Buddha's physical body, Kajiyama argues, was criticism of stūpa worship; praising the Buddha's Dharma-body was replacing stūpa worship with a new cult based on the worship of the Perfection of Wisdom (the 'body' consisting of the Dharma) itself.[9] We know, of course, that many early Mahāyāna sūtras such as the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā* and the *Lotus Sūtra* did indeed advocate the importance of elevating the actual sūtra and its worship. What Kajiyama highlights is the practical basis of the sūtra's praise of the *dharmakāya* and the Perfection of Wisdom, and its disparagement of

the physical body enshrined in a stūpa. It also follows that the first dimension of the meaning of *dharmakāya* in the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā* is the Perfection of Wisdom, precisely the sūtra itself, the *dharmakāya* as Dharma, as the Doctrine.[10] This harmonizes with Harrison's work and also with Lewis Lancaster's study of the oldest versions of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā* preserved in very early Chinese translations (Lancaster 1975). Lancaster suggests that most of the references to the *dharmakāya* in the Sanskrit text are later interpolations (including the quotation above). That is, the sūtra grew over a number of centuries, and one direction of growth was in elaborating its treatment of the *dharmakāya*. In the earliest version of the text the Buddha's actual body is an excellent but conditioned physical body, while the expression *dharmakāya* refers simply to the collection (i.e. the *kāya* in its 'extended' meaning) of the Buddha's sūtras. If we follow Kajiyama then the specific reference is to the Prajñāpāramitā sūtras themselves.

As Kajiyama points out, however, the term *prajñāpāramitā* in the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā* has a range of meanings, including the true nature of things (*dharmatā* = *śūnyatā*) and its cognition. Thus while the expression *dharmakāya* in the oldest Perfection of Wisdom literature was used to equal the Buddha's teaching, inasmuch as the Buddha's spiritual body, his teaching, is his body because, like him, it exemplifies the true nature of things, that true nature of things itself is that which is to be realized. Just as in the Sarvāstivāda tradition *dharma* in *dharmakāya* was taken to equal the real elements (*dharmas*) which, possessed to a full degree, make up the Buddha's realization, in the Perfection of Wisdom literature the *dharmakāya* gradually comes to refer not only to the Doctrine which sets forth the true nature of things, but also to the realization and the true nature of things itself. The *dharmakāya* is the body, or collection, of ultimate truths (*śūnyatā*: emptinesses); or, it is the mental *dharmas* cognizing the ultimate truth (= *prajñā*). The Buddha has died, but there remains the truth which he indicated, and its realization is still possible. Those whose concern is with historical issues of scriptural authenticity, or bodily relics, when the important thing is realization, are indeed foolish.

There are thus at least three interconnected dimensions to the *dharmakāya* in Prajñāpāramitā texts. First, the *dharmakāya* is the collection of teachings, particularly the Prajñāpāramitā itself. Second, it is the collection of pure *dharmas* possessed by the Buddha, specifically pure mental *dharmas* cognizing emptiness. And third, it comes to refer to emptiness itself, the true nature of things. The *dharmakāya* in all these senses is contrasted with the Buddha's physical body, that which lived and died and is preserved in stūpas.

The familiar later three body (*trikāya*) approach is not found explicitly stated in the early Perfection of Wisdom texts. Nor is it found in the writings of Nāgārjuna. In conformity with the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā*, Nāgārjuna speaks of a physical body and a *dharmakāya*. The Buddha's physical body (*rūpakāya*) is the result of his 'collection of merit', his compassionate deeds performed throughout infinite past lives. It is the incarnation of his compassion – the physical body of a Buddha exists for others. The Buddha's *dharmakāya*, on the other hand, arises from his 'collection of wisdom', from the Buddha's insight into emptiness. These two collections, Nāgārjuna explains, are the causes of Buddhahood (*Ratnāvalī* 3: 10–13; see

Nāgārjuna 1975). Accumulating merit and wisdom is the essence of the Mahāyāna path, the path to full Buddhahood. Nāgārjuna's attitude to the Buddha is further illustrated by the *Catuḥstava*, a collection of four hymns attributed with reasonable reliability to the Master. In the *Niraupamyastava* – the *Hymn to the Incomparable One* – Nāgārjuna describes in poetic, almost devotional, terms the wonders of the Buddha and his understanding of emptiness. And then Nāgārjuna raises his praises to a new and higher level: 'Even if you are not seen in a physical sense, it is said that you are seen. For by seeing the Dharma you are indeed well seen. (And yet) there is no seeing the true nature of things (*dharmatā*)'.[11] The true nature of things cannot be seen with the physical eyes, as was the physical body of the Buddha. Yet the Buddha manifests himself in accordance with the needs of others, teaching, for example, three vehicles although in reality there is only one (Tucci 1932: vv. 18–21). And: 'Your body is permanent, stable, primevally tranquil. It is of the nature of the Dharma . . .'.[12] Nevertheless the Buddha demonstrates an apparent death (a final nirvāṇa), although those who have faith in the Buddha can indeed still see him in the innumerable realms of the cosmos (*ibid.*: vv. 22–3). There is no clear distinction in Nāgārjuna's hymn between the Buddha as an actual being who is in some sense transcendent to this world (*lokottara*) but who manifests worldly activity out of his skill-in-means, remaining (perhaps in a Pure Land) after his apparent death in order to inspire his followers (cf. *Lotus Sūtra*), and the true body of the Buddha, which is his Dharma, or that which is indicated by his teachings, the true nature of things (*dharmatā*), emptiness. Rather, Nāgārjuna plays with both of these notions, contrasting them with the Buddha's actual physical appearance. A clear distinction between these two eventually gives rise to the three-body model. Nāgārjuna's failure to make the distinction is doctrinally confusing, perhaps, but poetically rather pleasing.

In another of Nāgārjuna's hymns, the *Paramārthastava* – *Hymn to the Ultimate* – Nāgārjuna speaks of the Buddha in his ultimate aspect, to all intents and purposes emptiness, the ultimate true way of things, itself. Almost the entire hymn is composed of negatives. The Buddha is neither nonbeing nor being, neither annihilation nor permanence, not noneternal, not eternal. He falls into no category of duality (Tucci 1932: 322, v. 4). He has no colour, no size, no spatial location and so on (*ibid.*: vv. 5–7). He cannot therefore be praised (*ibid.*: vv. 9–10). And Nāgārjuna ends with another of his gentle jokes: 'I have praised the Well-gone [Sugata – an epithet of the Buddha] who is neither gone nor come, and who is devoid of any going'.[13]

The Svātantrika Mādhyamika Bhāvaviveka, writing in the sixth century, speaks of the *dharmakāya* as beyond language and conception, neither existent nor nonexistent and so on. It is tranquil, the calming of all verbal differentiations.[14] We know from elsewhere in the same text that this is an exact characterization of the true state of things (reality: *tattva*), that is to say, emptiness.[15] For the Prāsaṅgika Mādhyamikas also, Prajñākaramati (tenth century) writes of the *dharmakāya* as having the nature of the ultimate reality.[16] Clearly, therefore, from the contrast of physical body and *dharmakāya* in the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā* and Nāgārjuna we find a fairly consistent pattern among later Mādhyamika theorists in using the term *dharmakāya* as an equivalent for emptiness, the ultimate truth. Nevertheless, inasmuch

as the *dharmakāya* is referred to within the context of Buddhology, so the *dharmakāya* is, I think, not so much simply a personification of emptiness as that which is set forth or exemplified in the Buddha's very being. It is his true nature, the lesson of which he embodies. Since the *dharmakāya* is the true being of others as well (for Mādhyamikas all are empty of intrinsic existence) so all, through having the *dharmakāya* within, as it were, can embody the *dharmakāya* – that is, all can become fully-enlightened Buddhas.[17]

Yogācāra – the system develops

Yogācāra texts frequently refer to the bodies of the Buddha. Particularly important as sources for their model, however, are the *Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra* (*M.sūtrāl.*) and its commentary, and Asaṅga's *Mahāyānasaṃgraha* (*M.saṃg.*).

The Yogācāra tradition generally speaks of the Buddha possessing three bodies (*trikāya*). The first is referred to as either the *dharmakāya* or sometimes as the *svābhāvikakāya* – the Intrinsic Body. These are two ways of referring to the same thing, although from different angles. The same body is said to be the *dharmakāya*, because it is the support of *dharmas*, and the Intrinsic Body because it is self-contained and does not contain anything contingent or adventitious (see Asaṅga 1938: *M.saṃg.* and comms. on 10: 1; Maitreyanātha 1970: *M.sūtrāl.* comm. on 21: 60–1). This *svābhāvikakāya* is the intrinsic nature of the Buddhas, the ultimate, the purified Thusness or Suchness (Maitreyanātha 1970: *M.sūtrāl.* comm. on 21: 60–1). Or, as a commentary to the *Mahāyānasaṃgraha* puts it, the Intrinsic Body is the true nature of things taken as a body (*ibid.*: on 10: 1). Recalling our discussion in Chapter 4, it is clear that the Yogācāra Intrinsic Body, the Buddha's highest 'body', is in fact his nondual purified flow of consciousness or awareness, the intrinsic nature of being a Buddha.[18] Put into the complex technical terminology of the Yogācāra tradition, the Intrinsic Body, the *Mahāyānasaṃgraha* informs us, is the dependent aspect as pure, immaculate. It is characterized by a 'revolution of the basis' inasmuch as the dependent aspect as tainted has been destroyed and the dependent aspect as pure revealed.[19] This *dharmakāya* is permanent (nondual consciousness is in reality always the case), and it is the support for other *dharmas* inasmuch as consciousness forms the basis for phenomenal illusion. More significantly, in the context of Buddhology, the *dharmakāya* is the basis for the other two bodies of the Buddha inasmuch as these further bodies represent the Buddha's compassion. They are not ultimately true, but just as the phenomenal illusion of the unenlightened is constructed on the basis of consciousness, so the further bodies of the Buddha are constructed out of compassion on the basis of nondual pure awareness (Maitreyanātha 1970: *M.sūtrāl.* 9: 60).

To the extent to which the *svābhāvikakāya* or *dharmakāya* is the Buddha's awareness, it is possible to say from the conventional, phenomenal point of view that the *dharmakāya* is the collection of good mental qualities which characterize being a Buddha. Yogācāra texts are thus able to harmonize their teaching with those works which speak, as we have seen, of the Buddha's *dharmakāya* as his collection of pure elements.[20] The *dharmakāya* is also said

to be the same as the Dharma-realm, the *dharmadhātu* (see Chapter 6 above; Asaṅga 1938: *M.saṃg.* comm. on 10: 31). The *dharmadhātu* is really the cosmos, the totality, seen from the enlightened visionary perspective, and hence in the light of its essential or fundamental aspect, what it really is. To speak of the *dharmadhātu* and the *dharmakāya* as one is to say that what the Buddha exemplifies, the intrinsic nature of the Buddha, his true nature, is no different from the intrinsic or true nature of all things when they are seen correctly. All things thus in a sense exemplify the Buddha. Put another way, the intrinsic body of the Buddha is the intrinsic or fundamental dimension of the cosmos – a point of religious and spiritual significance particularly developed, as we have seen, in East Asian Buddhism.

Our Yogācāra texts pose the serious question as to whether there can be only one Buddha, or whether there are many (Maitreyanātha 1970: *M.sūtrāl.* and comm. 9: 26/62/77; cf. Asaṅga 1938: *M.saṃg.* 10: 3/8). The answer is neither – or both. If we refer simply to the level of the true nature of things (the *dharmatā*) then there is no way of distinguishing one Buddha from another. On this ultimate level they have no real physical bodies to differentiate them. There is just the ultimate, which in itself is nonconceptual and nondual. Moreover, since their true nature is the same nondual reality, each Buddha as basis (= *dharmakāya* as the basis for other bodies) is the same. Furthermore, as Buddhas their intentions to act for the benefit of others are the same, and their Buddha activities – manifesting enlightenment out of compassion for others and so on – are the same. On the other hand one cannot say that all Buddhas are literally and in all respects the same. If that were the case there would not be many Buddhas. There would be only one Buddha. If that were true then when one being became a fully-enlightened Buddha then since there is only one Buddha all beings would become enlightened. Alternatively, if there were only one Buddha then since there can be only one Buddha it would be pointless for other unenlightened beings to strive to become enlightened.

Moreover, the *Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra* commentary argues, there could not be just one primeval or primordial Buddha (a view suggested in some other Buddhist traditions, such as Huayan), an *ādibuddha*, always enlightened. This is because there can be no Buddha without the twin accumulations of merit and wisdom, and there can be no such accumulations without a previous Buddha at some point in time. It is anyway absurd to have a Buddha without any beginning (Maitreyanātha 1970: on 9: 77). If there is just one primeval Buddha, say Śākyamuni understood in his transcendent aspect, then no other being could become enlightened. If, on the other hand, unenlightened beings can become enlightened after all by accumulating merit and wisdom, then there must have been previous Buddhas apart from anything else in order to indicate the way. Thus there would not be one primeval Buddha.

The second body of the Buddha is known as the *sambhogakāya* (or *sāmbhogikakāya*) – the Body of [Communal] Enjoyment. It is a physical body (*rūpakāya*) – it has a shape that actually appears – although not perhaps a body of gross material form. It manifests in different ways and at different places according to the needs of sentient beings (Asaṅga 1938: *M.saṃg.* 10: 35). No matter how excellent, the Enjoyment Body is an impermanent body.[21] It is in fact the glorified body of the Buddha, adorned with the 32 and the 80 marks, which appears

seated on a lotus throne in a Pure Land preaching the Mahāyāna to the assembly. It is the Buddha appearing in the way familiar in much of Mahāyāna Buddhist art. A common view in countries where Mahāyāna Buddhism is prevalent is that the Enjoyment Body preaches only to those Bodhisattvas advanced enough to attain a Pure Land, and the Mahāyāna sūtras are actually the result of the Enjoyment Body's preaching rather than that of the so-called historical Buddha Siddhārtha Gautama, who appeared not in a Pure Land but in ancient India. Historically, however, there are problems with this traditional account. The early Mahāyāna sūtras frequently speak as though they are being taught in India, and enumerate Hearers and Arhats as well as Bodhisattvas among their listeners. Of course, it is possible to explain this. The Hearers and Arhats were really Bodhisattvas, like Śāriputra in the *Lotus Sūtra*, who were either manifesting that way for a purpose or who had forgotten their mission. Nevertheless one suspects that in reality the view that all the Mahāyāna sūtras were the preaching of the Enjoyment Body in a Pure Land took some centuries to develop, and may indeed represent the final response of the Mahāyāna to the question of textual authenticity.

The Enjoyment Body is in many respects the most important body of the Buddha (Nagao 1991: esp. 107 ff.). It is the actual Buddha in his supramundane form, commonly said to be the Buddha of Buddhist devotion (see Chapter 10 below), a transcendent being animated through pure compassion. It is as an Enjoyment Body that a being actually attains Buddhahood. As we shall see, the third body of the Buddha, his Body of [Magical] Transformation, the corporeal 'human' Buddha Siddhārtha Gautama, was a mere image manifesting becoming enlightened for the benefit of beings. Certain texts, most notably the Yogācāra tradition represented by Xuanzang's *Chengweishilun*, speak of two aspects to the Enjoyment Body – the Enjoyment Body in its private sense, as experienced and enjoyed by the Buddhas themselves, and the Enjoyment Body for others, which is the Buddha appearing with his various marks for the benefit and enjoyment of the Bodhisattvas.[22] This would appear to be a later development possibly connected with the wish to find a place for the old *dharmakāya*, the Buddha's pure attributes, various knowledges, and so on, which would not taint the purity of the Yogācāra *svābhāvikakāya or dharmakāya* as nondual awareness, unqualified and beyond all language.

Little needs to be said of the Buddha's Transformation Bodies (*nirmāṇakāya*, or *nairmāṇikakāya*). The Buddha whom the non-Mahāyāna tradition lauds as *the* Buddha, the constant reference point for all doctrine and attempts at innovation, turns out to be simply a manifestation out of compassion, an 'eject', a conjuring trick, as it were, from the Enjoyment Body for the benefit of those whose attainments are so weak that they are unable to reach a Pure Land, or who are not yet capable of appreciating the Mahāyāna. The Transformation Body Buddhas manifest in whatever way is necessary for others.[23] Such manifestations may teach any teaching, Buddhist or non-Buddhist, out of compassionate skilful means. Often Transformation Bodies show the birth, renunciation, enlightenment, and death associated with the life of Siddhārtha Gautama, but not necessarily. A Transformation Body can manifest in any suitable way, even as an animal (see the Jātaka tales), in order to teach a particular point. Mahāyāna Buddhists in the modern world commonly have no

objection to seeing the historical Jesus Christ as a Transformation Body Buddha – a manifestation from an Enjoyment Body out of compassion in a form suitable to his particular time and place.[24] Moreover a Buddha can, of course, manifest infinite Transformation Bodies of different types at any one time. Thus through the two types of physical body of the Buddha (the Enjoyment Body and the Transformation Bodies) the Yogācāra schema encompasses the Mahāyāna doctrine of the immense status and acts of the Buddha, Mahāyāna devotion to the all-compassionate Lord, and also such aspects of religious doctrine and practice as the correct way to relate to other religions and to adapt doctrinally and institutionally to changing circumstances.[25]

A note on the dGe lugs model of the Buddha's bodies

Before leaving the topic of the bodies of the Buddha it seems worthwhile to look briefly at the schema (non-tantric; their tantric schema is slightly different) found in the dGe lugs tradition of Tibetan Buddhism. This is for a number of reasons. First, in philosophy the dGe lugs generally tries to follow very closely its understanding of Candrakīrti's (Prāsaṅgika) Mādhyamika, and yet in its treatment of the Buddha bodies the dGe lugs provides a model which synthesizes in certain respects Mādhyamika and Yogācāra treatments. In elaborating its understanding of the bodies of the Buddha it owes a great deal to the Yogācāra-Svātantrika Mādhyamika tradition, particularly to Haribhadra's commentaries on the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra*. In the Yogācāra-Svātantrika Mādhyamika we find precisely an attempt to bring together Mādhyamika and Yogācāra.[26]

Second, in looking at the dGe lugs treatment we can see the complex way in which later Buddhist scholasticism elaborated and developed its inheritance in terms of further distinctions and subdivisions. Moreover, the dGe lugs view is still very much alive among Tibetans today, and as Tibetan Buddhism becomes popular in the West many people have become interested in the dGe lugs teachings. These are generally the teachings of the Dalai Lama, for example, himself a dGe lugs hierarch.

In the dGe lugs the *dharmakāya* has two aspects, known as the Intrinsic Body (i.e. the *svābhāvikakāya*) and the Wisdom Body, or Body of Gnosis (*jñānakāya*). The Intrinsic Body also has two aspects. First, it is the absence of intrinsic existence (emptiness; *śūnyatā*) as it pertains to the Buddha's omniscient and nondual stream of consciousness. This aspect of the Intrinsic Body has always been the case. Even before the Buddha became enlightened his mind stream (like that of all of us) lacked intrinsic existence, and it was this lack which enabled it to change into an enlightened mind stream. One can say therefore that in a sense the Intrinsic Body of the Buddha is always there, even in unenlightened beings. It is that seed of the Buddha within each one which enables him or her to become fully enlightened. It is this, therefore, which is referred to by the dGe lugs tradition as the *tathāgatagarbha*. The other aspect of the Intrinsic Body is also an absence, this time the absence of all cognitive and moral obscurations in the Buddha's mind. This absence has not always been present, of course, but happens automatically or spontaneously when a being becomes a Buddha.

In both respects the Intrinsic Body for the dGe lugs is an emptiness (empty of intrinsic existence or empty of cognitive and moral obscurations), and since dGe lugs ontology is rigorously Prāsaṅgika Mādhyamika (for which only emptinesses are ultimate truths) so the Intrinsic Body alone is an ultimate truth. The other bodies, no matter how exalted, are conventional truths.

The Wisdom Body or Body of Gnosis is the Buddha's omniscient nondual awareness itself. This is the Yogācāra *svābhāvikakāya* or *dharmakāya*. The *dharmakāya* for the dGe lugs, therefore, is in substance the nondual mind stream of the Buddha, understood as empty of intrinsic existence and all obscurations, and therefore perfect and capable of infinite flexibility in order to help sentient beings. The Buddha's omniscient awareness constantly perceives emptiness in all things, and the things themselves, in the very same mental act. Each of the Buddha's senses is omniscient. Each sense can therefore do the work of each other sense. His awareness, his Wisdom Body, is also omnipresent inasmuch as the Buddha is nondualistically aware of all things.[27]

Commonly bodhisattvas become fully enlightened not on this earth but in one of the highest realms.[28] A Buddha on then attaining Buddhahood immediately manifests his Enjoyment Body, ornamented with the various marks, surrounded by a Pure Land and a retinue of advanced Bodhisattvas, teaching the Mahāyāna. The Enjoyment Body and Pure Land are made of his own omniscient wisdom awareness, and not gross matter. Moreover, all that the Enjoyment Body sees are seen as not being separate phenomena from his own mind. He occupies, therefore, the strange magical world of the *dharmadhātu* familiar from the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*. At the same time the Buddha spontaneously manifests myriads of Transformation Bodies according to the needs of sentient beings. There is no need for a Buddha to ponder the best way to help sentient beings.[29] The Enjoyment Body Buddha remains until there are no suffering sentient beings left unenlightened. The *dharmakāya*, the Buddha's radiant omniscient mind stream and its attendant emptinesses, remains for ever. There can be no end to a continuum of consciousness, for what could cause it to cease?

The dGe lugs distinguishes various types of Transformation Bodies. There are those which manifest like Siddhārtha Gautama, and perform the different deeds (12 in the standard list) of a human Buddha. Others can be artisans or craftsmen. There is a story in which a proud god-musician was humbled by the Buddha who manifested in the form of a better musician. Each played on fewer and fewer strings. The god played excellently on only one string, but the Buddha-musician continued playing sweetly with no strings at all (Dhargyey 1976: 208). Sometimes the Buddha can appear as an animal, or even an apparently inanimate object such as a tree, or a bridge to save those caught on the wrong side of a ravine. The Buddha can also appear in a heavenly realm, as in the case of Maitreya, who all Buddhist traditions hold will be the next Buddha on this earth. He is at present residing in the Tuṣita heaven awaiting the opportune time for his descent to earth. From this perspective Maitreya is actually already really a Buddha, or is an emanation, a Transformation Body, of one who has long been a Buddha.[30]

The whole dGe lugs model can best be summed up in a diagram as in Figure 8.1.

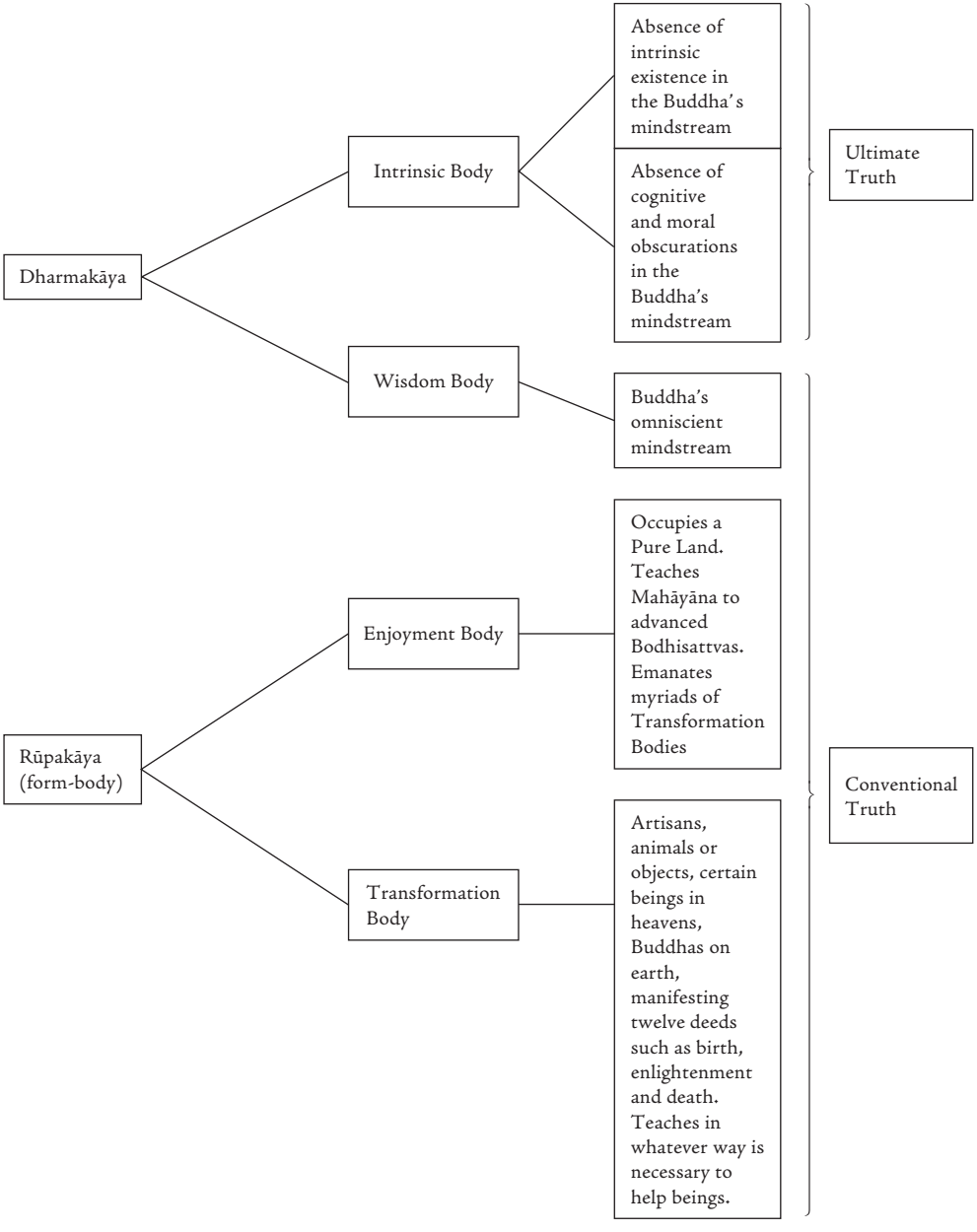

Figure 8.1 The dGe lugs scheme of the Buddha's bodies

A final note: the 'nonabiding nirvāṇa' and the lifespan of the Buddha

In the second chapter, while discussing the meanings of nirvāṇa in the Mahāyāna, I mentioned the supreme and compassionate *apratiṣṭhita* nirvāṇa (the so-called 'nonabiding' or 'unrestricted', or 'not-fixed' nirvāṇa) of the Buddha and contrasted it with the nirvāṇas attained by the Arhats and Pratyekabuddhas. I also mentioned a further point concerning whether a Buddha in the Mahāyāna ever eventually, at some point in the unimaginable future, will attain some absolutely final nirvāṇa (sometimes referred to in books as a *parinirvāṇa*) and go completely beyond recall or reference by suffering sentient beings. The expression *apratiṣṭhita nirvāṇa* was probably introduced as a term, although not necessarily as a concept, by the Yogācāra tradition. It is best understood initially from the side not of a Buddha but of a Bodhisattva, an aspirant on the path to Buddhahood. It is crucial in his or her practice that the Bodhisattva renounces saṃsāra, the round of ignorant misapprehension and false behaviour, and also any idea of nirvāṇa as not just the negation of greed, hatred and delusion but also a transcendence and neglectful abandonment of the institutions and persons of saṃsāra. That is, the Bodhisattva in going beyond duality abandons greed, hatred and delusion, but does not abandon suffering sentient beings. He or she attains wisdom but preserves compassion. If nirvāṇa is understood as not just abandoning greed, hatred and delusion, but also abandoning in this life all concern for the institutions and persons of 'the world', and after death returning no more to help those institutions and persons (i.e. becoming an Arhat), then the Bodhisattva renounces also nirvāṇa. Thus the nirvāṇa that is attained by the Bodhisattva when he or she attains Buddhahood is not that type of nirvāṇa. Rather, it is a nonabiding nirvāṇa, an unrestricted, or not-fixed nirvāṇa, which is to say that it is a nirvāṇa which embodies two dimensions – the upward movement away from saṃsāra, away from greed, hatred and delusion, and a downward movement returning out of compassion to the maelstrom of saṃsāric institutions and persons (see Nagao 1981: 61 ff.). The Buddha abides neither in saṃsāra, for he is a Buddha, nor in nirvāṇa in the sense that he has abandoned suffering sentient beings. In a sense he has a foot (or a lotus) in both camps, while in another sense he is in neither. He has gone beyond all duality and all clinging. He clings neither to the world nor to transcendence.

But will a fully-enlightened Buddha nevertheless, perhaps in the unimaginable future, eventually attain to some sort of final nirvāṇa? Clearly, this problem concerns pre-eminently the Enjoyment Body. There is no question of the *dharmakāya* attaining a final nirvāṇa, for the *dharmakāya* does not attain anything at all. It is permanent, remaining for ever in its own nature. Things are always empty of intrinsic existence; the continuum of pure radiant awareness never ceases. The Buddha's Transformation Bodies, on the other hand, in one sense can be said to attain a final nirvāṇa, but in another sense do not. A Transformation Body is a manifestation for the benefit of beings, and among the deeds of Transformation Bodies is the manifestation (as we saw in the *Lotus Sūtra*) of a final nirvāṇa. Thus the Transformation Body can attain a final nirvāṇa. Nevertheless, since the manifestation is unreal, just a show, the final nirvāṇa is also unreal, just a show.

If we look specifically at the Enjoyment Body, the transcendent glorified Buddha, then we can detect two theories on the eternality of the Buddha (Poussin 1928–48: 3, 803 ff.). According to such texts as the *Dazhidulun*, the *Lotus Sūtra* (text, rather than its East Asian interpretation) and the *Suvarṇabhāsottama Sūtra*, after an enormously long period of time a Buddha will eventually enter final nirvāṇa, although according to the first of these the Buddha's Transformation Bodies will continue in order to help sentient beings.[31] These texts clearly operate with the (older?) notion that the length of a Buddha's life, as with all beings, is the result of his merit gained in the past. Since the Buddha's merit, while immense, cannot be literally infinite (as it is the result of finite acts), the Buddha's lifespan must in reality be finite (cf. *Suvarṇabhāsottama Sūtra* 1970: 5–8). In other texts, however, apparently later in date, such as the *Buddhabhūmi Śāstra*, the Buddhas never enter final nirvāṇa.[32] Part of the problem is that some texts view beings as infinite, and other (Yogācāra) texts maintain that there are some beings who as a matter of fact will never attain enlightenment. The Buddhas remain, therefore, either to continue to save infinite sentient beings, or to try and provide more pleasant rebirths for those who will never put an end to the round of saṃsāra.[33] Here we find the extreme point of the Mahāyāna emphasis on compassion. The concern of the Buddhas is so great that they are resolved never to enter any final nirvāṇa of complete quiescence and peace, but rather to remain and help other beings.

Of course, inasmuch as the Buddhas see things correctly, so, as the Prajñāpāramitā sūtras state, no beings are really saved, and there is no nirvāṇa to attain. What more do fully-enlightened Buddhas have to gain by entering any further state called 'final nirvāṇa'? They act tirelessly for the sake of sentient beings, for in Buddhas there are no negative experiences such as tiredness. And from the side of suffering sentient beings themselves the Enjoyment Body Buddhas remain exerting their infinite compassionate deeds so long as a single being remains unenlightened.

9 The path of the Bodhisattva

Buddhism reaches Tibet

The beginning of the transmission of Buddhism to Tibet in earnest is associated with the reign of the king Srong btsan sgam po (pronounced: Song tsen gam po), who died *c*. 650 CE. This king was largely responsible for inaugurating a period of phenomenal Tibetan expansion which created over the next 200 years a vast empire in Central Asia which repeatedly defeated imperial Chinese armies and at one stage captured the Chinese capital of Chang'an (763) and established a short-lived puppet Chinese emperor. Tibetan imperial expansion led to surplus wealth which could finance the trappings of newly discovered and newly desired civilization. Buddhism was already well established in the areas overrun by Tibetan armies; it was an adaptable, civilizing force with willing missionaries. Srong btsan sgam po is held to have married, among others, two princesses, one Chinese and one Nepalese, although only the Chinese queen is known from relevant early documents. The queens are said to have brought from their homelands Buddhist artefacts and ideas. According to later tradition, the king had temples built in Lhasa (then known as Rasa) in order to house the Buddhist statues given by his queens. If true, these would be the oldest temples and the earliest statues of Tibetan Buddhism. However, while none of this would be very surprising, even if it happened it scarcely amounts to a wholesale propagation of the Buddhist faith. Later pious Tibetan tradition portrays Srong btsan sgam po (now said to be an emanation of Avalokiteśvara) as a Buddhist convert and enthusiastic propagandist for Buddhism, but as far as we can tell the transmission of Buddhism was actually a far slower process. Per Kvaerne has pointed out that contemporary documents make no mention of Buddhism, and king Srong btsan sgam po appears to have died and been buried still adhering to the old pre-Buddhist cult centred on the divinity of the king and involving blood sacrifice.[1] As late as 727 a Chinese traveller to India commented: 'As far as the country of Tibet in the East is concerned, there are no monasteries there, and the teachings of Buddha are unknown' (Hoffmann 1975: 127).

Although Tibetans were certainly in close contact with Buddhism prior to his reign, Buddhism is first mentioned in Tibetan official documents during the time of Khri srong lde'u btsan (pr.: Tri song de tsen; 742–*c*. 797). This king was an enthusiastic supporter of the faith, and his reign marks the definitive introduction of Buddhism into Tibet. He is

seen by later Tibetan tradition as the second of the three Dharma kings, an emanation of Mañjuśrī. If we follow traditional accounts, king Khri srong lde'u btsan invited the great Indian scholar Śāntarakṣita to Tibet. The Indian scholar laid the foundations for the first monastery in Tibet, at bSam yas (pronounced: Samyay). Nevertheless, the later story runs, the local Tibetan gods hindered Śāntarakṣita's progress, and he returned to India having advised that the king invite the tantric yogin Padmasambhava to Tibet in order to quell through magic its gods and bind them to the service of the Dharma. This Padmasambhava did with spectacular success. Some scholars have seen in the figures of Śāntarakṣita and Padmasambhava two contrasting types of Buddhist adept, models of sainthood, prevalent in Indian Buddhism at this time – the scholarly abbot, and the wandering tantric yogin, a *siddha*, a magician who cannot be placed in any category, and is free from all external constraints. The *siddha*'s actions may shock, may be antinomian; he or she is a person of power operating for the benefit of beings from the position of a Buddha, behind and beyond all laws. The relationships between monastic Buddhism and the *siddha*, who may or may not be a monk, have not always been easy. Some Tibetan traditions veer more towards the one as a model or towards the other. But these are only types. Śāntarakṣita practised the Tantras as did the great Tibetan monastic scholars such as Sa skya Paṇḍita (1182–1251) and Tsong kha pa (1357–1419). *Siddhas* such as Padmasambhava and Nāropa (possibly 956–1040) did not neglect the study of doctrine as taught in the great monastic universities, and the Tibetan traditions which trace their lineage in particular to these *siddhas*, the rNying ma pa (pronounced: Nying ma pa) and bKa' brgyud (pronounced: Ka gyer), have also produced great monastic scholars. Promoted retrospectively as the founder of the rNying ma pa tradition, Padmasambhava has been revered from about the fourteenth century onwards as a totally miraculous being, a Second Buddha, sometimes eclipsing almost completely Śākyamuni. In the earliest sources, however, there is little evidence for the quite exceptional status of Padmasambhava, and indeed some scholars have questioned whether he ever really existed at all. Be that as it may, Tibetan tradition holds that as a result of Padmasambhava's activities Śāntarakṣita was able to return to Tibet, bSam yas monastery was completed, and the first Tibetan monks were trained. It was also during the reign of king Khri srong lde'u btsan that the so-called bSam yas debates occurred. Because of the direct relevance of these debates to the Buddhist path, however, they will be treated in the next section.

It is clear from the records that Khri srong lde'u btsan elevated the monkhood to a very high position indeed, beyond that of his ministers and the other nobility. In so doing he contributed substantially to the alienation of his aristocracy. In addition, grants for the upkeep of the monks amounted to an additional tax on the populace. Much of this was in keeping with Indian precedent (and contrasts with China), but it aggravated still further relationships with the non-Buddhist nobility, and also with the peasantry, who were required by law to support the monks. The third Dharma king, Ral pa can (pronounced: Rel pa chen; reigned 815–838), held by later piety to be an emanation of the Bodhisattva Vajrapāṇi, showed even more enthusiasm for Buddhism. As a sign of respect and obeisance he is said to have tied pieces of string to his long hair, the other ends of which were tied to strips of cloth.

These pieces of cloth were spread out on the ground for the monks to sit on. Ral pa can's extensive patronage of the Buddhist monks and monasteries at a time when Tibetan armies were facing reverses in Central Asia appears to have been linked with a financial crisis. Eventually Ral pa can was murdered by two disaffected ministers, with or without the connivance of his brother, gLang dar ma, who now ascended the throne (838). gLang dar ma is portrayed in later Buddhist tradition as having instituted a persecution of Buddhism, closing monasteries and confiscating their estates. Possibly, however, faced with a dire financial situation, gLang dar ma simply curtailed state support of the Buddhist monasteries. For the monks, used to lavish support, this may have been tantamount to persecution. It is said that gLang dar ma was himself killed by a Buddhist monk and yogin, dPal gyi rdo rje (pronounced: Bel gyee dor jay) who, out of skilful means animated by compassion, decided to save the Dharma and also the king by preventing him from carrying out further crimes (842). By the death of gLang dar ma monastic Buddhism had all but perished in Central Tibet. It also coincided with the end of the Tibetan empire. Thus ends the period known as the First Diffusion of the Dharma in Tibet.

Slowly, however, monasticism in Tibet revived. Instrumental in bringing about a Second Diffusion of the Dharma in Tibet was the king of a region in western Tibet, who subsequently became a monk-king, known as Ye shes 'od (pronounced: Ye shay er). This king built monasteries and sent youths to India in order to study as monks and train as translators. It is said that Ye shes 'od particularly wanted to invite the great Indian scholar and saint Atiśa to Tibet, and according to a cherished tradition, when the monk-king was captured by a Muslim Turkic tribe and thrown into prison, he insisted that the ransom raised for his release be used instead to invite Atiśa to consolidate the revival of monastic Buddhism in Tibet. Ye shes 'od, the tradition runs, died in prison, a martyr to the faith.[2] Atiśa (982–1054) spent some years in Tibet teaching, translating and ensuring a form of Buddhism firmly based on scholarship, morality, and a strict monastic tradition within which tantric ritual and magical meditative practice nevertheless had a legitimate place. Atiśa (whose principal disciple was a Tibetan layman, 'Brom ston (pronounced: Drom tern)) wrote for his pupils in Tibet a short treatise known as the *Bodhipathapradīpa*, the *Lamp on the Path to Enlightenment*, in which he outlined a system integrating all Buddhist practices as he had received them from his many teachers into a gradual path based on morality and culminating in the development of compassion and wisdom completed through tantric practice. This treatise has been enormously influential in Tibetan religious thought.

During Atiśa's time, Tibetans were also founding schools. The layman-translator Mar pa (1012–96) travelled a number of times to India, bringing back several tantric teachings.[3] His disciple, the famous lay yogin and poet Mi la ras pa (pronounced: Mi la ray pa; 1040–1123), had a monk disciple sGam po pa (1079–1153) who was instrumental in establishing the bKa' brgyud school. The bKa' brgyud, while owing a great deal to its lay tantric predecessors, developed particularly as a monastic tradition which has subsequently split into several lineages. Among the most famous of these bKa' brgyud lineages is that of the Karma pa (divided itself into the Red Hat Karma pa and the Black Hat Karma pa). It may have been the Karma

pa which formally introduced the idea of succession through reincarnation. It is said that when the second Black Hat Karma pa, head of the Black Hat lineage, died in 1283 a child was recognized as his reincarnation and trained to occupy once more his religious and administrative position. This phenomenon of 'incarnate lamas' was subsequently adopted by other traditions (the Dalai Lama is the best-known case), and is a feature of the form of Buddhism found in Tibet and areas such as Mongolia that adopted Tibetan Buddhism.

Politically, the period after the collapse of the Tibetan imperial dynasty is marked by the gradual centralization of power in the hands of the one organization which could offer some form of stability in times of near-anarchy, the monasteries. Even before the arrival of the Mongols Tibet had seen the growth of powerful monastic centres headed by 'prince-abbots' and sometimes allied to local kings. Tibet hurried to submit to the terrifying Mongol scourge. The Mongol Godan Khan, who was grandson of Chinggis (Genghis) Khan and interested in religion and particularly magic, invited the monk reputed to be the most celebrated in all Tibet, the head of the Sa skya tradition, Sa skya Paṇḍita Kun dga' rgyal mtshan (pronounced: Kern ga gyel tsen; 1182–1251), to visit him in his camp (1244). Impressed, Godan became his patron and, with Mongol backing, over a period of time the Sa skya school became politically dominant in Tibet. Sa skya Paṇḍita was succeeded by his nephew 'Phags pa (pronounced: Pak pa; 1235–80), the teacher of Khubilai Khan, the Khan who became Mongol emperor of China. As an offering after tantric initiation, the powerful Khubilai Khan effectively made 'Phags pa a present of Tibet (Kapstein 2006: 112). This period saw not only the establishment of Sa skya power over Tibet, but also immense Sa skya influence in Mongolia and China. Unfortunately the Tibetan lamas were often accused by the Chinese of arrogance and worldliness.[4] Internal wrangling and connection with the barbarian Mongolian conquerors did little to help their popularity in China, and Sa skya power collapsed with the decline of the Chinese Mongol empire (the Yuan dynasty). Within Tibet, through warfare Sa skya lost political control (but not spiritual influence) to other 'princely-monastic' traditions, notably for some time the bKa' brgyud lineage known as the Phag mo gru pa (pronounced: Pak mo dru pa), followed later by the Karma bKa' brgyud.

The preceding traditions of Tibetan Buddhism are sometimes known, following Chinese custom, as 'Red Hats' (the Black Hat Karma pa notwithstanding). This marks a contrast with the most recent of the Tibetan schools, Tsong kha pa's 'Yellow Hat' dGe lugs pa. The dGe lugs pa sees itself as marking a return to the Indian textual sources, particularly as they had been systematized in Atiśa's synthesis. Tsong kha pa stressed moral purity, monastic austerity (the Vinaya) and formidable learning, particularly in doctrine, philosophy and debate but without neglecting appropriate tantric practice. He is associated with the founding of the first dGe lugs monastery, dGa' ldan (pronounced: Gan den), close to Lhasa, in 1409. The other two great dGe lugs monastic universities, 'Bras spungs (pronounced: Dre pung) and Sera, were founded also near to Lhasa in 1416 and 1419 respectively. One of Tsong kha pa's pupils, dGe 'dun grub (pronounced: Gen dun drup), founded bKra shis lhun po (pronounced: Tra she hlun po) monastery some distance south-west of Lhasa. On the death of

dGe 'dun grub his reincarnation was discovered in dGe 'dun rgya mtsho (pronounced: Gen dun gya tso), and on the latter's death in bSod nams rgya mtsho (pronounced: Sir nam gya tso; 1543–88). Ever in search of patronage, it is said that this bSod nams rgya mtsho so impressed a Mongol leader, Altan Khan, with his learning and spirituality that the khan referred to him as an 'ocean' (Mongolian: *dalai*).[5] As his teacher (Tibetan: *bla ma*; pronounced: lama) bSod nams rgya mtsho thus became the Third Dalai Lama, for his two previous incarnations were given the title retrospectively. When bSod nams rgya mtsho's own reincarnation, the Fourth Dalai Lama, was found in a Mongol family as the great-grandson of Altan Khan, powerful Mongol support for the dGe lugs tradition was complete. Since that time many of the great dGe lugs teachers have been ethnically Mongol.

Politically, on the other hand, the situation had deteriorated. The growing power of the dGe lugs monasteries had led to a religio-political rivalry with other political powers, particularly the Karma pa bKa' brgyud. Geographically this rivalry represented an old rivalry between Central Tibet, dominated by Lhasa and the dGe lugs, and south-western Tibet (gTsang) whose king supported the Karma pa and resented Lhasa ambitions and pretensions. The situation became most unpleasant, with armed bands, sometimes monks, allied to each side sacking each other's monasteries, although at times both Dalai Lamas and Karma pa hierarchs intervened to mediate and defuse a potentially dangerous situation. Nevertheless, the story is not very edifying. Suffice to say that this anarchy ended when, during the mid-seventeenth century, the Mongol Gushri Khan defeated and killed the king of gTsang and gave political control of Tibet to the Fifth Dalai Lama, Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho (pronounced: Nga wang lo zang gya tso; 1617–82), a learned and yet politically shrewd monk and ruler. From that time on the Dalai Lamas, providing they reach maturity, have been at least in theory (more or less) the political leaders of the Tibetan people.[6]

The eighth-century debates

Let us return now to the time of Khri srong lde'u btsan. During the first diffusion of Buddhism in Tibet the establishment of Buddhism was closely involved with political rivalry between the king and his powerful nobles. Within Buddhism itself there were also rivalries. King Srong btsan sgam po is said to have had two Buddhist wives, one from Nepal and the other from China. We know that Chinese wives of subsequent kings were associated with Chinese Buddhist missionaries. It seems likely that any Indian wives also would have had their missionaries. This no doubt meant that a number of rather different forms of Buddhism were introduced together into Tibet. It seems that partisans of these different traditions were by the time of Khri srong lde'u btsan in a state of open antagonism, with advocates of one approach threatening to kill those of another (Houston 1980: 32). In particular, Tibetan tradition holds that these different approaches polarized into that represented by a Chinese monk (*heshang*) named, appropriately enough, Mahāyāna (Chinese: *Moheyan*), and the approach of Śāntarakṣita and his disciple Kamalaśīla. The Chinese monk appears to have been a follower of some form of Chan (Zen), although exactly which form

is disputed by scholars. Śāntarakṣita is said to have died some time before the debate (or debates – it is now thought that in reality there may have been a series of controversies lasting, perhaps, for some years). The side of Śāntarakṣita was represented by Kamalaśīla. Late sources lead us to believe that Kamalaśīla's faction was very much in the minority. The debate (which if there was just one probably took place at bSam yas monastery, perhaps around the year 797) was of great importance to later Tibetan thought and its view of its antecedents and development. Accounts are contained in a number of later Tibetan works which seem to agree in essentials, although this may be because they all depend on the same original. There are also Chinese accounts of the debate.

We are told that it was held in the presence of the king, and the monk Mahāyāna was the first to speak:

> If you commit virtuous or non-virtuous deeds, because you go to heavens and hells, (you still) are not liberated from *saṃsāra*. The path to Buddhahood is obscured. . . . Whoever does not think anything; the one who does not ponder will become completely liberated from *saṃsāra* . . . he is instantaneously enlightened. He is equal to one who has mastered the tenth *bhūmi*.[7]

In other words, enlightenment not only has nothing to do with morality, but it is positively hindered by good and bad deeds, which lead to heaven and hell and bind one still further to the round of rebirth. Enlightenment lies in cutting all thought, all mental activity, and must necessarily be instantaneous (or 'simultaneous' – there are problems of interpretation and translation here). There can be no stages, necessarily conceptual, to nonconceptual awareness.

If we can follow the Tibetan Bu ston (1290–1364), Kamalaśīla replied to his rival Mahāyāna that if his opponent were right then there could be no wisdom (*prajñā*) gained through conceptual activity. But surely liberating wisdom is precisely the *result* of conceptual activity, of analysing to find out whether an entity has or has not intrinsic existence. In a state of no thought at all how can there be insight? How can there be renunciation of the wrong view if one has not attained to the right view? Moreover, Kamalaśīla's colleagues pointed out, to attain enlightenment suddenly is to abandon the path of gradual cultivation through the six perfections of giving, morality, and so on. And if one accepts a sudden enlightenment which cannot be cultivated then what is to be done? There can be no religious practice at all. Hence the monk Mahāyāna's approach is one which contradicts the scriptures, destroys morality and compassion, and also destroys any possibility of actually generating insight.[8] The king, we are told, was persuaded by these arguments and judged Kamalaśīla's party the winner. Henceforth, he decreed, everyone should follow the teachings of Nāgārjuna and engage assiduously in the practice of morality and the perfections. There is a Tibetan tradition that Mahāyāna and his followers were expelled from Tibet. It is said that some of them committed suicide.[9]

It has been suggested that since Khri srong lde'u btsan wished to improve the morality of his semi-barbaric people he was likely from the beginning to accept the testimony of Kamalaśīla and his party (Houston 1980: 9). Certainly, it was not in the interests of the

king to advocate a position which denied the value of good deeds and placed the spiritual practitioner outside the nexus of moral (and legal) control. Moreover it may not have been in his interests to side too closely with Chinese Buddhists, for Tibet was still at war with China. Throughout subsequent Tibetan thought the view of the monk Mahāyāna has frequently been taken as one of the archetypal 'wrong views'. Mahāyāna's position is seen as a dangerous misinterpretation. Tsong kha pa will often accuse his opponents of falling into this heresy, inasmuch as they tend to deny the role of intellectual analysis in generating insight into emptiness. It should be clear that some of the tension between the two approaches can be traced to an opposition between a common Mādhyamika view of emptiness as an absence of intrinsic existence in the object under investigation, and the *tathāgatagarbha* perspective on emptiness, so influential in Chinese Buddhism including Chan, which sees emptiness as the radiant pure mind empty of its conceptual accretions.[10] This second approach sees concepts, and mental activity which is necessarily conceptual, as obscurations, clouds covering an innate pure radiance (an image which is repeated by Mahāyāna, according to Bu ston, in describing his position). By way of contrast, our first approach divides conceptual activity into profitable and unprofitable, with intellectual analysis that investigates whether or not something exists intrinsically as not just profitable but essential to a proper understanding of emptiness.

In recent years scholars have gained access to a number of very early fragmentary writings found at the Central Asian oasis site of Dunhuang. This site was under Tibetan imperial control for some time, and some of the writings, in Tibetan, give perhaps a rather clearer account of what Mahāyāna's views actually were. It is known that as a matter of fact Mahāyāna himself did not ignore morality, but was quite prepared to administer the monastic vows. According to one of these fragments the practitioner should accumulate merit and practise the perfections, although the ultimate is beyond them (Gómez 1983: 118, 127). The picture we get from these fragments is that the monk Mahāyāna saw the root cause of saṃsāra as discrimination (*vikalpa*; *ibid*.: 107). Thus enlightenment comes from cutting the discriminating mind. However, this does not seem to refer to striving to cut all thoughts altogether, for that too would be a clinging:

> When he enters a state of deep contemplation, he looks into his own mind. There being no-mind, he does not engage in thought. If thoughts of discrimination arise, he should become aware of them. . . . Whatever thoughts arise, one does not examine. . . . He does not examine any dharma whatsoever. If he becomes aware in this way of the arising (of thoughts, he perceives) the absence of self-existence. . . . After sitting (in this manner) for a long time, the mind will become tame, and one will realize that his awareness is also discriminating mind. . . . Awareness itself is without name or form. . . . [T]he awareness and place where it occurs cannot be obtained by any search. There is no way of reflecting on the inconceivable. Not to cling even to this absence of thought is (the immediate access of) the Tathagatas.
>
> (Gómez 1983: 108–9)

In this way there can be liberation in each moment of thought: 'But if one were to experience non-examination and does not act according to these concepts, or accept them, or become attached to them, then every instant of mind is liberated at each moment' (*ibid.*: 125). These practices have something in common with Zen, and also with the Tibetan rNying ma pa tradition known as *rDzogs chen* (pronounced: Dzok chen), the Great Perfection (or 'Completion'). They are certainly far subtler than the traditional Tibetan accounts of monk Mahāyāna's views. But what of Mahāyāna's attitudes to morality and the perfections? In fact he shows a tendency to reinterpret the perfections of giving, morality and so on in a way consonant with his meditative practice. Thus: 'When one enters non-examination, he brings to perfection great morality, because there is no arising of any faults in any of the three doors (of conduct)' (Gómez 1983: 122). One interpretation of this is that morality and so on have their place *after* one has attained to direct insight through cutting all conceptualization. Such an approach also has Zen parallels. A version of it is held by Dōgen, for example.

According to the traditional Tibetan account, Kamalaśīla was subsequently murdered, although it is not clear by whom. Before his death, however, he wrote three works, known as the three *Bhāvanākramas*, summarizing the path as he saw and taught it, and also his criticisms of any approach to Buddhist practice like that of the monk Mahāyāna. This approach, Kamalaśīla observes, is to reject correct analysis which leads to understanding. With no understanding, moral taints and impurities cannot be overcome. Moreover, to attain enlightenment it is necessary to complete the two collections of merit and wisdom. Merit comes through the means of giving, morality, and so on. These people destroy the Mahāyāna. They over-inflate their own views, are without respect for the wise, and ignore the Buddha's words. Being destroyed themselves, they seek to destroy others. Their words are infected with the poison of contradiction, violate logic and scriptural tradition, and they should be rejected by the wise.[11] Thus Kamalaśīla's view of the quietism and antinomianism sometimes associated with Zen. And what it also shows is that at this time, in Tibet and between certain Indian and Chinese teachers, there were radical disagreements as to how exactly one followed the path to Buddhahood.

In the first *Bhāvanākrama* in particular Kamalaśīla systematically explains the stages of the path as he understands and advocates it. This text together with Atiśa's *Bodhipathapradīpa* and a commentary attributed to Atiśa himself are among the most important Indian sources for the progressive stages on the path to enlightenment in Tibet. The path begins for the Mahāyāna with compassion, for, says Kamalaśīla, 'compassion alone is the root cause of all the qualities of the Buddha'.[12] It is to this path, and compassion in particular, therefore, that we now turn.

Compassion and the Bodhicitta

According to Atiśa in his *Bodhipathapradīpa*, beings can be divided in terms of their motivations or aspirations into three types: the lesser, the middling and the superior. Those of

lesser motivation take as their goal themselves alone – they are selfish – and act simply for the pleasures of saṃsāra, either in this life or in some future rebirth. Other texts will state that as a motivation or aspiration this does not deserve the name 'religious' at all. Those in the second category, that of middling aspiration, turn their backs on the pleasures of existence and renounce immoral deeds. They act in order to bring about their own pacification, in other words in order to attain enlightenment as an Arhat. But those of highest, superior, motivation strive to bring a complete end to all the sufferings of others along with their own suffering. Atiśa has written the *Bodhipathapradīpa* for this last category, the superior beings who follow the Bodhisattva path of the Mahāyāna.[13]

Thus we have ordinary worldly beings, those who are on the path to the nirvāṇa of an Arhat, and finally the Bodhisattva whose aspiration includes removing the sufferings of all sentient beings. The distinctions between these persons rest on their aspirations. One corollary of this is that the distinction between Mahāyāna and non-Mahāyāna is not as such one of schools, traditions, Vinaya, robes or philosophy. It is one of motivation, the reason for following the religious path. As such, there can be a Mahāyānist, one with the highest motivation of complete Buddhahood for the sake of all sentient beings, following any Buddhist sect. This fits with what we know of the historical origins of the Mahāyāna, embedded firmly within the non-Mahāyāna traditions. One can speak of a particular philosophy, say the Sarvāstivāda or Sautrāntika systems, as a non-Mahāyāna philosophy, and the Mādhyamika and Yogācāra as Mahāyāna philosophies, but one cannot say for certain of a particular person whether he or she is a Mahāyānist or not without knowing whether that person has developed the Mahāyāna motivation. Hence (as Tibetans sometimes point out) there may be many who hold to Mahāyāna philosophies, and also carry out Mahāyāna rituals, who are not genuine followers of the Mahāyāna. Their real aspiration may be their own liberation, or even worldly goals such as fame or money.

Developing the authentic Mahāyāna motivation is called 'generating *bodhicitta*', the Mind of Enlightenment or Awakening Mind. This *bodhicitta* results from deep compassion (*karuṇā*) for the suffering of others.[14] In the first chapter of his *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, Śāntideva (695–743) praises the *bodhicitta* in the following terms:

> Those who long to transcend the hundreds of miseries of existence, who long to relieve creatures of their sorrows, who long to enjoy many hundreds of joys, must never abandon the Awakening Mind.
>
> When the Awakening Mind has arisen in him, a wretch, captive in the prison of existence, he is straightway hailed son of the Sugatas [the Buddhas], to be revered in the worlds of gods and men.[15]

Compassion is the basis and motivating force of the Bodhisattva. From it, therefore, springs the entire edifice of the Mahāyāna. Kamalaśīla states that '[t]he Buddhas, the Blessed Ones, attained to their omniscience by embracing compassion; and they so rejoice in the welfare of the world that they remain therein, nor do the Blessed Ones abide in nirvana, because of their compassion' (Beyer 1974: 100). According to the current Dalai Lama,

> We should have this [compassion] from the depths of our heart, as if it were nailed there. Such compassion is not merely concerned with a few sentient beings such as friends and relatives, but extends up to the limits of the cosmos, in all directions and towards all beings throughout space.
>
> (T. Gyatso 1979: 111)

Truly generating this deep compassion and the resultant *bodhicitta* is a completely life-transforming experience; one ceases to be an ordinary being and becomes a 'Son or Daughter of the Buddhas' (*Bodhicaryāvatāra* 1: 9; see Śāntideva 1960). This is not simply an idle thought: 'Wouldn't it be nice to be a Buddha for the sake of all sentient beings!' Rather, at least as it is explained in the Tibetan traditions of the 'graduated path', it results from a very specific and sustained series of meditations.[16]

First, it is presupposed that very few practitioners are capable of commencing straight away with the Bodhisattva motivation. We all begin with the first motivation, that of self-concern with the pleasures of this and other worlds – whether we realize it or not. Preliminary meditations are used, therefore, in order to raise the aspiration of the practitioner from this 'sensual' motivation to one of concern for liberation from saṃsāra altogether – in other words, the motivation of the Arhat. More specifically, Tsong kha pa speaks of the 'three principal aspects of the path' – renunciation, compassion, and emptiness. It is necessary to have renunciation before one can truly begin to generate compassion.[17] To this end a series of graded meditations are recommended. One first meditates on the rarity and value of a human rebirth, a birth with time and the ability to understand and practise the Dharma. Next the meditator contemplates impermanence and death, the fact that death comes to everyone and is certain, although the time of death is uncertain. At the time of death only spiritual development will be of help. This generates enthusiasm for practising the Dharma straight away, 'as if there were no tomorrow'. One meditates on karma and rebirth, which helps to develop the moral basis for spiritual practice. If the meditator practises these meditations systematically then by this stage he or she will have given rise to a spiritual and moral perspective and a genuine concern with virtue which will lead to favourable future rebirths. Next the practitioner contemplates the various forms of rebirth and suffering throughout the six realms (gods, titans or anti-gods (*asuras*), humans, hungry ghosts (*pretas*), animals and hell realms). The practitioner visualizes each of the six destinies and their sufferings, their ultimate unsatisfactoriness. Only after repeatedly meditating like this will a feeling of complete renunciation for all rebirth in saṃsāra, and a desire for Arhatship, arise. It is then, and only then, that meditation intended to generate *bodhicitta* has any real meaning.[18]

The Third Dalai Lama, bSod nams rgya mtsho, states that:

> [T]here is a need to look to the goal of complete Buddhahood, which is ultimate fulfillment from both one's own and others' point of view. Moreover, one should not think to gain Buddhahood merely for one's own benefit. One should want it purely in order to be able to more efficiently and deeply benefit sentient beings. Just as you have

> fallen into the ocean of samsaric misery, so have all others; and they, like you, know only frustration and misery.
>
> (S. Gyatso 1982: 109–10)

The causes of generating *bodhicitta* in general, and the meditations in particular, differ somewhat in different texts. In Tibetan Buddhism, however, there are frequently said to be two meditations derived from Indian sources which, practised carefully and repeatedly, will lead eventually to the arising of *bodhicitta*.

The first meditation is called the 'six causes and one effect'. It can be traced in the second *Bhāvanākrama* of Kamalaśīla and in the commentary to Atiśa's *Bodhipathapradīpa*. As a preliminary the meditator is required to produce a feeling of equanimity or equality, 'an unbiased attitude' towards all sentient beings. He or she visualizes in front an enemy, a friend, and one to whom feelings are neutral. All are really alike. In the endless series of rebirths each has been a friend, an enemy, and neutral many times, each has helped and hindered. None is really, intrinsically, a friend or enemy. Each, even in this life, can become enemy or friend, or a person to whom one no longer has any feeling. Thus we generate a feeling of equanimity, of equality towards all. Now, briefly, for the six causes and one effect. (i) Since we have all had infinite births in the past, so each sentient being no matter how lowly has been our mother in this or previous births infinite times (and every other relationship, of course). (ii) As our mothers, beings have been immensely kind to us, undergoing great sufferings and trouble for our sake.[19] (iii) At the present time all our 'mother sentient beings' are undergoing great sufferings. What can we do? We have a duty, an obligation, to repay their kindness by helping them all to the uttermost limit of our ability. The Third Dalai Lama states:

> Like members in a drunken procession staggering towards a cliff, they are stumbling over the precipice of evil into the suffering of cyclic existence and the lower realms. Think, 'If I do not do something for these pathetic, feeble beings, who will? . . . Were I to ignore these kind beings and work only for my personal liberation from saṃsāra, what lack of conscience and consideration!'
>
> (S. Gyatso 1982: 116)

(iv) and (v) In the light of this the meditator generates great love: 'May these mother sentient beings have happiness, and its causes'. And the meditator generates great compassion: 'May they be free of suffering, and its causes'. (vi) Finally, the meditator decides to take upon himself the responsibility for helping all sentient beings. However, the next question is whether it is actually possible to do very much to help even a few beings, let alone every single one? Meditating in this way, the practitioner concludes that it is only possible to fulfil one's aspirations and duty to all sentient beings by becoming a fully-enlightened Buddha, with all the abilities and powers of a Buddha to help others.

Thus the meditator generates the 'one effect', the *bodhicitta*, the altruistic aspiration to perfect enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings.

The second meditation for developing *bodhicitta* is called 'exchanging self and others'. It can be traced to the eighth chapter of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*. First, one meditates that all are equal in that all beings, like me, desire happiness and the avoidance of suffering. Śāntideva says:

> I should dispel the suffering of others because it is suffering like my own suffering. I should help others too because of their nature as beings, which is like my own being.
>
> When happiness is liked by me and others equally, what is so special about me that I strive after happiness only for myself?
>
> When fear and suffering are disliked by me and others equally, what is so special about me that I protect myself and not the other?[20]

Next, one becomes aware that each person individually is as important as I am, and therefore, objectively, since others are greater in number than I am so, as an aggregate, others are always more important than myself. Thus, in helping, it is rational to help others rather than myself. The meditator may at this point repeat the equanimity meditation given above. Then, he or she meditates on the faults and problems involved in cherishing self rather than others. Śāntideva (1960: 8: 129) states that 'All those who suffer in the world do so because of their desire for their own happiness. All those happy in the world are so because of their desire for the happiness of others.' The result is that one is able to 'exchange self with others'. The current Dalai Lama asserts that '"[t]he only purpose of my existence is to be used by others and to serve others". This idea, this attitude, this determination must arise from the depths of one's heart, from the very depths of one's mind' (T. Gyatso 1975: 140).

The foregoing is linked with a practice known as 'giving and taking', in which the meditator visualizes in front of him or her beings suffering in various situations or realms, and imagines that he or she is taking on their sufferings with the inhaling breath, and breathing out happiness, which transmutes the negative situation of sentient beings into one of happiness and bliss. Tibetans will often state that when this practice is perfected a Bodhisattva can genuinely take onto himself or herself the sufferings and illnesses of others.[21]

Thus arises the *bodhicitta*. Atiśa describes a ritual for taking the Bodhisattva vows in front of a suitable master.[22] The original idea appears to have been that one would make a resolution in front of the Buddha himself.[23] According to a later version of the ceremony, three times the aspirant repeats:

> May all the buddhas and bodhisattvas abiding in the ten directions deign to take notice of me! May the master deign to take notice of me! I, named so-and-so, by virtue of wholesome roots developed from giving, from morality and from meditation in this and other rebirths – that I have done, had done, or appreciated the doing of – just as previous tathāgata, arhat, completely fulfilled lord buddhas and bodhisattvas great heroes abiding on a high stage, first generated the thought towards supreme, right and full awakening, so likewise, from this time forth until reaching the site of awakening, in order to ferry over the stranded, to release the bound, to revive the breathless, to bring

> to nirvana those not yet in nirvana, I generate a thought towards supreme, right and full great awakening.
>
> (Gyaltsen 1982: 30)

With the completion of this ceremony the aspirant is a Bodhisattva, and is deemed to have undertaken certain commitments, including never abandoning any sentient being, or retreating into the lower aspiration of the Arhat vehicle. The most moving statement of the aspirations and hopes of a Bodhisattva who has generated *bodhicitta* is found, as always, in Śāntideva (3: 7–10):

> I am medicine for the sick. May I be both the doctor and their nurse, until the sickness does not recur.
>
> May I avert the pain of hunger and thirst with showers of food and drink. May I become both drink and food in the intermediate aeon of famine.
>
> May I be an inexaustible treasure for impoverished beings. May I wait upon them with various forms of offering.
>
> See, I give up without regret my bodies, my pleasures, and my good acquired in all three times, to accomplish good for every being.

According to the texts, it is only said to be *bodhicitta* if the compassion is embedded in an awareness of emptiness. Thus *bodhicitta* is said to have the nature of emptiness and compassion. Ever since at least as early as the *Saṃdhinirmocana Sūtra*, however, it has been asserted that there are two types of *bodhicitta* – the ultimate and the conventional or relative *bodhicittas*. Ultimate *bodhicitta* is, according to the sūtra, 'beyond this world, cannot be formulated by concept or speech, is extremely radiant, the image of the Ultimate, immaculate, unshakeable, and very bright like the steady glow of a lamp on a calm night'.[24] Since the *Saṃdhinirmocana Sūtra* is a Yogācāra text, it seems likely that ultimate *bodhicitta* (etymology: enlightenment mind) is the pure radiant mind of an enlightened being, possessed of compassion. For Sthiramati, in common with the *Saṃdhinirmocana Sūtra*, the *bodhicitta* is equal to the *dharmakāya* 'as it manifests itself in the human heart' (Suzuki 1963: 299; cf. the *tathāgatagarbha*). From the point of view of a Prāsaṅgika Mādhyamika like Tsong kha pa, too, there is no problem in seeing the ultimate *bodhicitta* as the mind stream of a Bodhisattva or Buddha endowed with compassion and directly cognizing emptiness (Hopkins 1984: 56).

Conventional *bodhicitta*, the moral bodhicitta, *bodhicitta* properly speaking, is also of two types – aspiring and engaging *bodhicittas*. Śāntideva says (1: 15–16):

> The Awakening Mind should be understood to be of two kinds; in brief: the Mind resolved [aspiring] on Awakening and the Mind proceeding [engaging] towards Awakening.
>
> The distinction between these two should be understood by the wise in the same way as the distinction is recognized between a person who desires to go and one who is going, in that order.

Kamalaśīla does not differ substantially from this:

> Now this intention is the initial yearning for Buddhahood: 'Oh, that I might be a Buddha, for the sake of all beings!' And the setting forth [engaging] is the actual making of a vow to become a Buddha, and the actual accumulation of the stocks of merit and knowledge.[25]

Thus the Bodhisattva who truly wishes to help others, or, even better, who spontaneously produces the wish to help sentient beings whenever he or she sees suffering, has generated aspiring *bodhicitta*. Actually engaging in the practices of the Bodhisattva path, the perfections and so forth, with this as a basis, is the engaging *bodhicitta*. It is along this path – or, at least, some versions of it – that we shall now follow.[26]

Bodhisattva stages, paths and perfections

With the arising of the *bodhicitta*, according to the *Sūtra on the Ten Stages*, the *Daśabhūmika Sūtra*, the Bodhisattva enters the first of the 10 stages (*bhūmi*) on the path to Buddhahood, a stage known as 'Joyous'. It appears, however, that there must have been circulating at one time a number of schemes on the Bodhisattva's path, for a text such as the *Bodhisattvabhūmi* has a somewhat different plan. As time passed, some attempt was made to bring these different schemes into line, and we find this in the systematic plan given, for example, in Kamalaśīla's *Bhāvanākrama* (and briefly by Atiśa), and followed in Tibet by, say, the dGe lugs tradition.[27]

According to the plan of the *Bhāvanākrama*, the Bodhisattva, once *bodhicitta* has arisen, technically has not yet attained the first Bodhisattva stage. He or she must strive in wisdom and means, without neglecting either (as does the monk Mahāyāna).[28] 'Means' here refers to the five perfections of giving, morality, endurance (or patience; *kṣānti*), effort and meditative concentration.[29] 'Wisdom' refers to the perfection of wisdom. Thus it is important for the Bodhisattva to combine the three types of wisdom – from study, deep consideration, and meditation – with skill-in-means which will prevent any neglect of the welfare of others. In particular, Kamalaśīla advocates that the Bodhisattva now devote time to meditative practice and the development, if it has not been developed before, of perfect calm abiding (*śamatha*). He thus gains the ability to enter the various trances and meditative states familiar from other systems of meditation. With the attainment of calm abiding our Bodhisattva can learn to combine it with analytic insight into emptiness.

Both Kamalaśīla (implicitly) and Atiśa relate this process in the Bodhisattva's development after the arising of *bodhicitta* to a stage known as the Path of Accumulation (*sambhāramārga*). The schema of five 'paths' to enlightenment is known from non-Mahāyāna Mainstream Buddhist sources such as Sarvāstivāda, and may originally have marked a different plan of the path from that of the 10 stages.[30] In Atiśa's and Kamalaśīla's schemes, and subsequently in Tibet, the two plans of 'paths' and 'stages' are combined in a way which does not always appear very satisfactory.[31]

The Path of Accumulation is entered, according to dGe lugs writers, when there arises a fully-developed *bodhicitta*. This path has a number of stages, each of which is indicated by various attainments. For example, during the first stage of the Path of Accumulation one masters the four 'establishings of mindfulness' (*smṛtyupasthāna*; Pali: *satipaṭṭhāna* – see Gethin 1998: 195). That is, one understands through close meditative examination the body, feelings, the mind, and all the physical and mental processes (*dharmas*). In the third and final stage the meditator is said to develop through cultivating calm abiding the ability to visit celestial realms in order to make offerings and acquire merit, and also the ability to see teachers, and statues of the Buddha, as actual Buddhas.[32]

As we have seen in Chapter 3 on Mādhyamika above, when analytic meditation on emptiness itself generates calm abiding, then one is said to enter the second of the five paths, the Path of Preparation (*prayogamārga*). Kamalaśīla makes it clear that while a Bodhisattva at this stage is still technically an ordinary person (*pṛthagjana*) and not an Ārya, a Noble Being, nevertheless he or she is quite beyond the stage and attainments of the average 'man in the street'. The Path of Preparation has four stages, known as heat, peak, patience (or endurance) and supreme mundane *dharmas*, which indicate progressively deeper understanding and experience of emptiness, refining away all conceptual awareness and dualistic apprehension. Various attainments accompany his progress. He will never take rebirth again in the lower realms.[33] The Bodhisattva at this stage attains the five powers of deep faith, armour-like exertion and perseverance, recollection (of the Four Noble Truths and their ramifications), meditative absorption – the combination of calm abiding and insight – and wisdom, the 'ability to examine the void nature of the Four Noble Truths'.[34]

When our Bodhisattva attains direct, nonconceptual and nondual insight into emptiness in meditative absorption then he attains the Path of Insight (*darśanamārga*).

At this point, according to the systemic account of Kamalaśīla and others, he enters the first Bodhisattva stage (*bhūmi*). At this stage also the Bodhisattva becomes an Ārya, a Noble One, and has control over all his future rebirths. He gains many powers and attainments, and the Bodhisattva can see many Buddhas and receive teachings from them. He develops various clairvoyances, can pass through objects and manifest in many forms at a time in order to help others (Dhargyey 1976: 197). Indeed, with progressively higher stages the Bodhisattva's attainments are multiplied to multicosmic proportions.[35] For example, it is said of a Bodhisattva at this first stage that he has 12 attainments. After rising from meditation he can, in just one instant:

> 1. see a hundred Buddhas; 2. receive the blessings of a hundred Buddhas; 3. go to a hundred Buddha Lands; 4. illuminate a hundred lands; 5. vibrate a hundred worldly realms; 6. live for a hundred eons; 7. see with true wisdom the past and future for a hundred eons; 8. enter into and rise from a hundred meditative stabilizations; 9. open a hundred different doors of doctrine; 10. ripen a hundred sentient beings; 11. emanate a hundred of his own body; 12. cause each of the hundred bodies to be surrounded by a hundred bodhisattvas.
> (Hopkins 1983: 100)

These 12 attainments are multiplied by powers of 10 throughout each subsequent stage. Also onto the different stages of the Bodhisattva path are projected in various sources the numerical lists of spiritual practices and acquisitions formulated through the centuries of scholastic contemplation of the Buddha's attainments and path, although one should say that unfortunately there is not always consistency in different texts in attributing these to each stage. Thus in the relatively early *Daśabhūmika Sūtra* the Bodhisattva is said at the third *bhūmi* to attain the four meditative absorptions (*dhyāna*), the four non-material meditative absorptions (*arūpadhyāna*), the four *brahmavihāras* of friendliness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity and the five supernormal faculties (*abhijñā*) of the divine eye, the divine ear, ability to know the thoughts of others, knowledge of birth and death – the previous births of himself and others – and wonder-working powers such as flying etc.[36] At the fourth stage the Bodhisattva practises and attains the 37 elements of enlightenment.[37] And so on.

If we return now to our Bodhisattva on the first stage, the Joyous stage, sources tell us that he (or she) is accordingly filled with joy, and according to the *Daśabhūmika Sūtra* he makes 10 great vows. Briefly, as enumerated by Dayal these are as follows:

> (1) To provide for the worship of all the Buddhas without exception; (2) To maintain the religious discipline that has been taught by all the Buddhas and to preserve the teaching of the Buddhas; (3) To see all the incidents in the earthly career of a Buddha; (4) To realise the Thought of Enlightenment [*bodhicitta*], to practise all the duties of a bodhisattva, to acquire all the *pāramitās* [perfections] and purify all the stages of his career; (5) To mature all beings and establish them in the knowledge of the Buddha . . . (6) To perceive the whole Universe; (7) To purify and cleanse all the buddha-fields; (8) To enter on the Great Way [Mahāyāna] and to produce a common thought and purpose in all bodhisattvas; (9) To make all actions of the body, speech and mind fruitful and successful; (10) To attain the supreme and perfect Enlightenment and to preach the Doctrine.[38]

In particular, the Bodhisattva at this first *bhūmi* concentrates on cultivating the perfection of giving (*dānapāramitā*) – although it should on no account be thought that the Bodhisattva only gives at this stage.[39] It is rather a question of emphasis; no perfection is neglected at any stage on his path.

It is one of the features of the *Daśabhūmika Sūtra* that it correlates each of the 10 stages with a different perfection.[40] The more common scheme of six perfections is perhaps expanded to 10 precisely for this purpose. The essence of giving is described as bestowing wealth with an unattached mind. Giving can be classified into three categories: material goods, fearlessness and the Dharma itself, which is the highest of gifts because it has the highest, most perfect result (sGam po pa 1970: 153 ff.). The gift of fearlessness means to be a refuge to those in fear. According to the *Bodhisattvabhūmi* (a section of the Yogācāra work, the *Yogācārabhūmi*), 'A bodhisattva, when the proper time has come, gives with confidence and respect, with his own hands, and without harming others' (*ibid.*: 156). However, the perfections become perfections inasmuch as they are embedded in an awareness of emptiness.

The Bodhisattva in giving has no awareness of the intrinsic existence of giver, recipient, and gift. Among the specific objects which it is said a Bodhisattva might give are wealth, material objects such as food or clothing, his life or limbs, wife, children (but not parents), even poison if it is useful and given with compassion.[41] There are many jātaka-type stories, often incorporating folk legends, known throughout the Buddhist world in which Śākyamuni in a previous life as a Bodhisattva gives something terribly valuable freely and without question when asked or invited to do so.[42]

It may be worth mentioning at this point the phenomenon known as 'transference of merit'. An important part of Mahāyāna practice, commonly marked at the end of every ceremony, and indeed every event which might be said to create merit for the participants, is the bestowing of whatever merit may have been attained to the benefit of other sentient beings. This appears to contradict the supposed rigidity of the law of karma. It is clear from the preceding that the wish of the Mahāyāna practitioner to give away his merit is part of a general wish to give away anything which may be of benefit, and also a constant reminder of the reason for undertaking the long journey to full enlightenment. That journey is solely for the benefit of others. In terms of the Bodhisattva's *own* motivation and aspirations, the issue of *others'* karmic results is scarcely relevant. The importance is his or her own intention. Nevertheless, in terms of emptiness and mind-dependence, the magical world of the Mahāyāna, when things are seen to lack intrinsic or dualistic existence karma does lose its rigidity, and a benevolent intention (backed with insight) can work wonders. Thus the notion of transference of merit fits squarely within the ontology and spirituality of the Mahāyāna.

Having said that, however, it should not be thought that the institution of transference of merit is solely or uniquely a Mahāyāna phenomenon. It is found throughout the Buddhist world. Inscriptional evidence in India shows that merit transference was a part of Buddhism from a very early date indeed. Gregory Schopen has suggested that in ancient Indian inscriptions what distinguishes Mahāyāna from non-Mahāyāna transference of merit is that whereas in the latter case the merit is usually transferred to a particular person simply in order that the recipient should have the merit, in specifically Mahāyāna inscriptions merit transference is for the benefit of all sentient beings, usually in order that they may all attain perfect enlightenment.[43] It is likely that the doctrine of karma has rarely in practice been treated in as rigid a manner as some texts would suggest. There are texts which state that karma is never lost, no matter what happens, but in the context of Buddhist practice (which is, after all, what Buddhism is all about) it is likely that these texts took on an exhortative character ('Do not do evil deeds and think you can get away with it!'), and were not treated as making rigid doctrinal statements about the nature of things. Karma does not entail that a virtuous and generous person cannot give away his or her merit for the benefit of others. Who is to say that this generosity is misplaced?

The fourth of the five paths is the Path of Cultivation (*bhāvanāmārga*), and in the systematic model of, e.g., Atiśa and Kamalaśīla all the remaining nine Bodhisattva stages, as well as the other perfections, occur during this path which (short of adopting tantric

practice, which can lead to Buddhahood in one lifetime) is said to take aeons of compassionate activity and striving to follow to its end. At the second *bhūmi*, known as the 'Stainless', 'Immaculate' or 'Pure', the Bodhisattva is said to be possessed of a perfectly pure morality. He thus practises in particular the second of the perfections, the perfection of morality, and attains to their highest degree the 10 good paths of action – three physical: abstention from killing, stealing and sexual misconduct; four vocal: abstention from lying, slanderous, insulting and frivolous speech; and three mental: abstention from greedy desire, malice and false views. In perfecting these one learns to practise their opposites, cherishing and saving life and so on. Correct behaviour becomes natural. The Bodhisattva also commends this morality to others, and becomes their teacher, guide, and protector. Nevertheless, in spite of this morality, as Tsong kha pa points out, following Candrakīrti, 'if they do not abandon the view that phenomena intrinsically exist, then their ethics will not be pure but will be faulty though apparently proper' (commenting on *Madhyamakāvatāra* 2: 3ab, trans. in Hopkins 1980: 195). That is, the morality of one who does not understand emptiness cannot be pure, even if it appears to be so, for it is not the perfection of morality.[44] Of course, the Bodhisattva at this stage also has the many miraculous meditative attainments that we have seen already, and is becoming progressively more wonderfully extraordinary.

According to Tsong kha pa and Candrakīrti, the third *bhūmi*, 'Luminous', is so called because when it is attained there appears a fire of wisdom which burns all knowables, and a light which extinguishes all elaborations of duality in meditative absorption, while in the Bodhisattva there appears a 'copper-like splendour' (Hopkins 1980: 204). The Bodhisattva thoroughly understands impermanence, and it is at this stage that the virtue of endurance (patience) becomes perfected. The Bodhisattva is patient and not disturbed, we are told, even when his body is cut 'not just flesh but also bone, not in large sections but bit by bit, not continually but pausing in between, and not finishing in a short time but cutting over a long period' (*ibid*.: 206). He is perfectly patient and no anger arises. He views those who do the deed with infinite compassion.

According to sGam po pa, endurance is of two sorts. First, the Bodhisattva counteracts any wish for hurting, he does not quarrel, does no harm in retaliation, and is not insistent (sGam po pa 1970: 175). Second, endurance puts up with misery – that is to say, it means not being 'fatigued by hardships involved in realizing unsurpassable enlightenment and to accept them joyfully' (*ibid*.: 178).[45] Besides perfecting endurance at this stage, the Bodhisattva completely destroys desire and hatred, and also reaches various higher meditative absorptions. As a result of this, as we have seen, he attains the five supernormal faculties of the divine eye and so on.

At the fourth stage, called 'Ignited', or 'Radiant', the Bodhisattva particularly cultivates the 37 elements of enlightenment. These include (again) the four 'establishings of mindfulness' (*smṛtyupasthāna*) of the body, feelings, the mind and all the physical and mental processes (*dharmas*), as well as various 'right exertions' and other miraculous abilities, faculties, powers and so on (for details see Dayal 1932: 80 ff.). Also at this fourth stage the

Bodhisattva acquires the perfection of effort (energy, heroism or strength: *vīrya*). According to sGam po pa, this is the counteracting of laziness, idleness, faintheartedness and so on – but, of course, on a heroic scale.[46]

The fifth stage is called 'Difficult to Conquer', since the Bodhisattva is said to be unable to be conquered by any or all demons, the forces of evil. He practises uniformity and purified intention as regards the doctrines of past, present and future Buddhas and so on.[47] At this stage our Bodhisattva masters the perfection of meditation. According to sGam po pa, the essence of this perfection lies in the 'tranquility by which the mind abides within itself by the oneness of the good and wholesome' (sGam po pa 1970: 188). That is, the mind is one-pointed. Indeed, it is precisely at this point that treatises on the 10 stages describe the attainment of calm abiding. But this provides obvious problems. We have seen that in the model which combines the five paths and the 10 stages calm abiding was a prerequisite to beginning the 10 stages, and it seems out of place to introduce it here.[48] In fact we are dealing with a model which probably originally progressed through six not 10 stages, culminating in one-pointed absorption and wisdom. This schema was expanded to 10, and combined with the miraculous, cosmic scale of the *Daśabhūmika* world. The schema was also grafted onto the five-path model. The result tries to include everything.

Through his meditation at this stage the Bodhisattva comes to know truly and correctly the Four Noble Truths, and also any other sort of truth (such as ultimate and conventional). He is aware, of course, that all *dharmas* lack intrinsic or dualistic existence and are akin to illusions, but, according to the *Daśabhūmika Sūtra*, this simply increases his love and compassion all the more (Honda 1968: 176 ff.; Cleary 1984–7, Vol. 2: 49). Since they may be useful, the Bodhisattva at this stage learns various secular arts such as mathematics and medicine, music and history.[49]

The sixth *bhūmi*, 'Approaching', is the stage at which our aspirant attains the perfection of wisdom. He is said to be concerned with the correct apprehension of dependent origination (*pratītyasamutpāda*). This in itself suggests the antiquity of a model which culminated in wisdom, for the association of enlightenment with the formulae for dependent origination has been part of Buddhism from early times.[50] Of course, as we have seen, in Mādhyamika dependent origination is associated with the lack of intrinsic existence. Things are neither born nor do they perish, but they are still involved in the appearance of birth and death. Nevertheless, it might be thought paradoxical to find the Bodhisattva attaining the perfection of wisdom at this point, if direct insight into emptiness, the content of the perfection of wisdom, was a prerequisite to attaining the first *bhūmi*, and all the preceding perfections are only perfections precisely inasmuch as they are underpinned by an awareness of emptiness.[51]

Completing the sixth *bhūmi* the Bodhisattva, with the mastery of wisdom, could if he so wished abandon the world and enter the peace of (Arhat) nirvāṇa. With wisdom he no longer has attachments. Without attachments, craving, the fuel of saṃsāra should cease. But the Bodhisattva is a Bodhisattva; he has developed great compassion and the *bodhicitta*. He does not practise for his own benefit but in order to fulfil his obligations to sentient beings. Thus,

in a sense, we might say that a sliver of holy attachment (although we call it compassion) remains. There are Mahāyāna texts which make precisely this point.[52] Nevertheless, the compassion of the Bodhisattva is not really attachment as a moral or cognitive fault, for the Bodhisattva knows that there is no intrinsic or dualistic existence and therefore he cannot have attachment. It is precisely because there is no intrinsic or dualistic existence that the Bodhisattva can act in many miraculous ways for the benefit of others. And with no intrinsic or dualistic existence, and no more taints, why should the Bodhisattva abandon the world and seek his own peace? Thus the Bodhisattva aims for a 'nonabiding' or 'unrestricted', or 'not-fixed' nirvāṇa which is neither saṃsāra nor nirvāṇa.

Having refrained from entering a selfish nirvāṇa the Bodhisattva spends the remaining stages developing skill-in-means, entirely devoted to the welfare of others. He is now beyond all Hearers and Pratyekabuddhas, the followers of the non-Mahāyāna traditions.[53] From the eighth stage, the 'Immovable', the Bodhisattva begins the immense task of eradicating for ever the obscurations to omniscience. From the seventh onwards he practises a further list of four perfections added to the original group of six: the perfections of skill-in-means, the vow, power and gnosis (or awareness; *jñāna*). At the seventh stage ('Gone Afar'), also, the Bodhisattva practises fully giving (!), pleasant speech, beneficent conduct and impartiality. His mind is always absorbed in the Dharma, even when asleep. He can manifest in whatever form he likes for the benefit of others, including that of an Arhat or, one assumes, a Buddha (cf. Honda 1968: 208; Cleary 1984–7, Vol. 2: 71). Commonly by the very end of the seventh stage or at the eighth the progress of the Bodhisattva is said to be irreversible (he or she attains the state of 'irreversibility' or 'nonretrogression'); he is destined for supreme Buddhahood and incapable of reverting to the methods of liberation and aspirations of the Arhats and Pratyekabuddhas.

In entering the Immovable stage the Bodhisattva is said by the *Daśabhūmika Sūtra* to be like a person who has awakened from a dream, and who has abandoned all false conceptualizations. He begins to see the world in a new way, even when not meditating, a way which will eventually lead to the omniscient awareness of a Buddha (Honda 1968: 219; Cleary 1984–7, Vol. 2: 77). All his activities at and after this stage are spontaneous or automatic, the results of his immense compassion and wisdom. There is no more striving, no more wanting, not even enlightenment. Events take their course naturally for the benefit of beings. All the Buddhas appear before our Bodhisattva and exhort him to attain Buddhahood (Honda 1968: 220; Cleary 1984–7, Vol. 2: 78). He already appears to have many of the powers of a Buddha. He can split his body into infinite (or near infinite) forms, and can now definitely appear in the form of a Buddha if he so wishes for the benefit of others (Honda 1968: 224–5; Cleary 1984–7, Vol. 2: 79–80). He has immense spiritual attainments, 'the details of which would take forever to tell' (Cleary 1984–7, Vol. 2: 88).

At the ninth stage, that of 'Good Intelligence', the Bodhisattva is said to acquire the knowledge and duties pertaining to all the vehicles – Arhats, Pratyekabuddhas, Bodhisattvas and Tathāgatas. He thereby delivers the Buddha's message to all suffering sentient beings. At this stage also, and rather strangely, he finally attains the four analytical knowledges

(*pratisaṃvid*) of *dharmas*, meaning, grammar and exposition.[54] In other words, at this rarefied level, with (according to these sources) infinite bodies and incomprehensible miracles, the Bodhisattva among other things completely masters grammar and becomes a wonderful preacher. Nevertheless, as a preacher the Bodhisattva really is quite special, for he can understand different questions from all the different beings in the entire cosmos in one go, and answer them all, each separately and satisfactorily, with just one sound (Honda 1968: 244 ff.; Cleary 1984–7, Vol. 2: 92 ff.).

Finally the Bodhisattva attains the tenth stage, called the 'Cloud of Dharma'. According to sGam po pa, this stage is so called because a Bodhisattva at this *bhūmi* 'lets the Dharma fall like rain and extinguishes the very subtle glow of conflicting emotions still held by sentient beings. Another reason is that it is covered by meditative absorption and mantras like the sky with clouds' (sGam po pa 1970: 250). The Bodhisattva enters into meditation and appears upon a wonderful jewelled lotus seat known as the Great King of Jewels. Many other Bodhisattvas appear, and light rays permeate all the directions which relieve the misery and sufferings of sentient beings. After further miracles and wonders the Tathāgatas consecrate our Bodhisattva to full Buddhahood (Honda 1968: 259 ff.; Cleary 1984–7, Vol. 2: 101 ff.). He can now put into one atom of dust an entire world region, or put innumerable sentient beings into one pore of his skin, without their suffering injury or indeed noticing. He can manifest all the deeds in the earthly life of a Buddha as many times as he wishes throughout innumerable worlds (Honda 1968: 270–1; Cleary 1984–7, Vol. 2: 1078). sGam po pa observes:

> Further, from every pore of his skin he is able to pour out a continual stream of innumerable Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. He can make visible many living beings, gods and men. As Indra, Brahmā, Maheśvara [Hindu gods], a king, a Śrāvaka, a Pratyekabuddha or a Tathāgata he can teach the Dharma as necessary to those who are to be taught.
>
> (sGam po pa 1970: 251)

Such is the tenth-stage Bodhisattva. Yet how does this compare with a Buddha? The question is absurd:

> Your question seems to me like that of a man who picks up a few pebbles and says, 'Which is bigger, the endless realms of the earth or these pebbles?' How can you compare the state of enlightening beings [Bodhisattvas] to that of buddhas, the completely enlightened, who have measureless knowledge.
>
> (Cleary 1984–7, Vol. 2: 110; cf. Honda 1968: 274)

Beyond the tenth stage is the stage of a Buddha, or the fifth of the five paths, that of No-more Learning (*aśaikṣamārga*). According to Tibetan traditions like the dGe lugs, to attain the final goal of complete Buddhahood commonly requires tantric practice. But then, according to the *tathāgatagarbha* and Huayan traditions of Sino-Japanese Buddhism, since all things interpenetrate, and the Buddha-nature is always present, one is already a Buddha, and all the stages are contained in the first. As Dōgen puts it, 'only Buddhas become

Buddhas' (Cook 1977: 115). According to the influential lay follower of Huayan Li Tongxuan (Li T'ung-hsüan; 635–730) 'enlightenment is already present at the outset of any striving for it, present specifically *in the form of faith or confidence*' (Gimello 1983: 345; italics original). We can see that the complete letting go of oneself – 'self-abandonment' – that occurs in faith or confident trusting is already enlightenment.[55]

So in the light of this all these systematic stages of a gradual path, taking aeons to complete, are perhaps a scholastic confusion. Who is to say who is right?

10 *Trust, self-abandonment and devotion: the cults of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas*

Buddhānusmṛti – recollection of the Buddha

The *Sutta Nipāta* of the Pali Canon is generally held by scholars to be one of the oldest extant Buddhist texts. At the very end of the *Sutta Nipāta*, in a section also held to be among the oldest strata of that text, is a wonderfully moving and, I think, potentially significant discussion. A Brahmin named Piṅgiya 'the wise' praises the Buddha in heartfelt terms:

> They call him Buddha, Enlightened, Awake, dissolving darkness, with total vision, and knowing the world to its ends. . . . This man . . . is the man I follow. . . . This prince, this beam of light, Gotama, was the only one who dissolved the darkness. This man Gotama is a universe of wisdom and a world of understanding.[1]

Why is it, Piṅgiya is asked, that you do not spend all your time with the Buddha, that wonderful teacher? Piṅgiya replies that he himself is old, he cannot follow the Buddha physically, for 'my body is decaying'. But:

> there is no moment for me, however small, that is spent away from Gotama, from this universe of wisdom, this world of understanding . . . with constant and careful vigilance it is possible for me to see him with my mind as clearly as with my eyes, in night as well as day. And since I spend my nights revering him, there is not, to my mind, a single moment spent away from him.
>
> (Saddhatissa 1985: vv. 1140, 1142)

In this ancient and extraordinary discussion Piṅgiya indicates that it was possible through his awareness, through his meditation, for him to be constantly in the presence of the Buddha and constantly to revere him. Towards the end the Buddha himself testifies that Piṅgiya too will go to 'the further shore' of enlightenment.

The interpretation of this discussion is perhaps difficult. One certainly should not assume that we have here a fully-fledged devotionalism. Nevertheless, Piṅgiya's praise of the Buddha and his reference to seeing him with the mind appear to connect with the practice of *buddhānusmṛti*, recollecion of the Buddha, a practice known from other contexts in the Pali Canon and practised by, as far as we can tell, all schools of Buddhism.

According to the Theravāda commentator Buddhaghosa, a meditator who wishes to practise recollection of the Buddha should go to a favourable spot for retreat:

> and recollect the special qualities of the Enlightened One . . . as follows: 'That Blessed One is such since he is accomplished, fully enlightened, endowed with (clear) vision and (virtuous) conduct, sublime, the knower of worlds, the incomparable leader of men to be tamed, the teacher of gods and men, enlightened and blessed'.[2]

The meditator recollects the features of the Buddha systematically and in detail. Among the results of such a meditation are that, in the words of Buddhaghosa, the meditator:

> attains the fullness of faith, mindfulness, understanding and merit. . . . He conquers fear and dread. . . . He comes to feel as if he were living in the Master's presence. And his body . . . becomes as worthy of veneration as a shrine room. His mind tends towards the plane of the Buddhas.[3]

If tempted to wrongdoing, our meditator feels as much shame as if face to face with the Buddha. Even if his spiritual progress stops at this stage, he will progress to a 'happy destiny'.

Three points are particularly worth noting here. First, there is the connection of *buddhānusmṛti* with attaining to a higher plane, a happy destiny, or the 'plane of the Buddhas'. Second, through recollection of the Buddha one becomes free from fear. We know from a Sanskrit sūtra source that *buddhānusmṛti* was particularly recommended as an antidote to fear (Tsukamoto 1985: 2, 1038–9). Fear, and the desire to see the Buddha, were, I think, important feelings in the centuries, perhaps even the decades, after the death of the Buddha. The *Gaṇḍavyūha Sūtra* speaks for many Buddhists when it states that:

> It is difficult, even in the course of hundreds of kotis of aeons, to hear a Buddha preach;
> How much more to see him, his sight being the supreme remover of all hesitations . . .
> Better it is to roast for Kotis of aeons in the three states of woe, terrible though they are,
> Than not to see the Teacher . . .
> Annulled are all the sufferings when one has seen the Jina, the Lord of the world,
> And it becomes possible to enter on gnosis, the sphere of the supreme Buddhas.
>
> (Conze *et al.* 1964: 188–9)

And third, through recollecting the Buddha, Buddhaghosa says, the meditator comes to feel as if he were living in the presence of the Buddha himself – so much so, that shame would deter him from evil deeds.[4] But how is this possible if the Buddha has died and is beyond recall? Is the result of recollection of the Buddha just some sort of weird feeling, a profound hallucination?

According to Paul Harrison, although there were a number of recollections common in Mainstream Buddhism, in Mahāyāna texts only recollections of the Buddha, Doctrine, and Community are important, with recollection of the Buddha by far the most significant. Harrison

suggests that while at first the Buddha was someone to be emulated, as time passed and memories faded he became more an object of devotion (Harrison 1978: 37). But perhaps as time went on for some people the Buddha also became an object to be reached, an object with whom they might hope to enter into some sort of real relationship akin to that which was experienced when he was present on earth. A need for the Buddha to be present, to console, clarify, teach and, it seems, also protect, may have been a significant factor in the development of Buddhism in the centuries after the death of the Master. In particular, I have suggested that the Buddha seen in meditation, and heard to teach ('living in the Master's presence') was a significant factor in the origins of the Mahāyāna, and Mahāyāna sūtra literature. The ancient practice of *buddhānusmṛti* was a practice well adapted to the needs of Śākyamuni's followers in the years after his death.[5]

There is a passage contained in the Mainstream Buddhist *Ekottarāgama*, part of the canon which survives in Chinese translation, in which there is given a far more detailed account of recollection of the Buddha than can be found in the Pali Canon. In this sūtra, recollection of the Buddha is said to lead to magic powers and even to nirvāṇa itself (Harrison 1978: 38). With the Mahāyāna doctrine of infinite Buddhas and Bodhisattvas dwelling in infinite Buddha Lands of the 10 directions (a doctrine perhaps itself influenced by the experiences of *buddhānusmṛti*) the practice of recollection of the Buddha gained still further in importance as a means of contacting those Buddhas and their realms. The *Saptaśatikā Prajñāpāramitā* describes the 'Single Deed Samādhi' by which one can quickly attain supreme enlightenment. The meditators

> should live in seclusion, cast away discursive thoughts, not cling to the appearance of things, concentrate their minds on a Buddha, and recite his name single-mindedly. They should keep their bodies erect and, facing the direction of that Buddha, meditate upon him continuously. If they can maintain mindfulness of the Buddha without interruption from moment to moment, then they will be able to see all the Buddhas of the past, present, and future right in each moment.[6]

What better way to attain enlightenment quickly than to see and receive teachings from not just one but infinite Buddhas? All the more so as social, political, and doctrinal circumstances in India suggested that people were entering the Dark Ages, the Last Days, when enlightenment on this earth (bereft of a Buddha) would be very difficult if not impossible to attain.

There is reason to believe that historically the development and promulgation of *buddhānusmṛti* practices may have something to do with the important meditation schools of Kashmir. We know that Kashmir was renowned throughout Central Asia and China for its teachers of meditation. Texts in which Mainstream Buddhist and Mahāyāna elements were mixed, but with a strong emphasis on recollection of the Buddha, composed in Kashmir and translated into Chinese by Kashmiri meditation masters, were important in fifth-century Chinese Buddhism and seem to have had a significant impact on the growth of 'paradise cults' in China, centred on visualization and visions.[7] The elaborate and sophisticated Buddhist meditation techniques were among the most important elements that attracted

the Chinese to the foreign religion. The great missionary Kumārajīva, himself from Central Asia (Kucha), spent some time in Kashmir and had a close interest in the practice of recollection of the Buddha. *Buddhānusmṛti* was also of deep importance to Huiyuan (Hui-yüan; 334–416), who practised the *pratyutpanna samādhi*, apparently a form of *buddhānusmṛti*, and corresponded on the subject with Kumārajīva. Accordingly, let us look more closely at the *pratyutpanna samādhi*, and Huiyuan's experience of it.

The *pratyutpanna samādhi* and Huiyuan

The *Pratyutpanna Sūtra* was first translated into Chinese by Lokakṣema in perhaps 179 CE. This makes it one of the earliest Chinese translations of a Buddhist sūtra. It contains the earliest datable literary reference to Amitāyus (= Amitābha) and his Buddha Field, his Pure Land, in the west.[8] Among the many interesting and unusual features of this early sūtra is the detail with which it describes and discusses the *pratyutpanna samādhi*, which appears to be the principal message of the sūtra.

The basis for practising the *pratyutpanna samādhi* is strict morality. A practitioner, lay or monastic, male or female, is requested to fulfil completely the moral code before entering into retreat. The meditator then retires to a secluded place and reflects on which direction the Buddha Amitāyus dwells. He or she concentrates on that Buddha, presumably facing the correct direction. The meditation conforms to what we have seen already of *buddhānusmṛti* practices. The practitioner contemplates the Buddha as being directly in front:

> *[B]odhisattvas* should concentrate on the *Tathāgatas* . . . as sitting on the Buddha-throne and teaching the Dharma. They should concentrate on the *Tathāgatas* as being endowed with all the finest aspects, handsome, beautiful, lovely to behold, and endowed with bodily perfection [etc.].[9]

Elsewhere cognitive as well as bodily excellences of the Buddha are noted and contemplated. Moreover, meditators are exhorted not to give rise to the notion of 'self' in any way for three months, or be overcome by 'sloth and torpor' (i.e. sleep), or sit down 'except to defecate and urinate' for three months (Harrison 1990: 45). Thus they should concentrate on Amitāyus

> for one day and one night, or for two, or three, or four, or five, or six, or seven days and nights. If they concentrate their thoughts with undistracted minds on the *Tathāgata* Amitāyus for seven days and nights, then, when a full seven days and nights have elapsed, they see the Lord and *Tathāgata* Amitāyus. Should they not see that Lord during the daytime, then the Lord . . . will show his face to them in a dream while they are sleeping.
>
> (Harrison 1990: 32)

And having seen the Buddha, our meditator can worship him, and receive teachings. This seeing of the Buddha is not with the 'divine eye', it is not the result of magic powers. The meditator does not need to develop the various supernormal faculties such as the divine

eye which, as we saw in the previous chapter, are only developed at the third Bodhisattva stage, and were thought in other texts to be the means by which one can see the Buddhas of the 10 directions. The Buddhas seen in the *pratyutpanna samādhi* are said to be apprehended on the analogy of dreams. This is possible because all is empty of intrinsic existence, and all is likewise Mind Only (Harrison 1978: 46 ff.; 1990: 38–43).

In September 402, Huiyuan and 123 others, monastic and lay, took a vow before an image of Amitāyus/Amitābha at Lushan, Lu Mountain, the monastic community which Huiyuan had established and where he lived for many years before his death. The group was a 'mutual support' group, and their vow a covenant to help each other to be reborn in Sukhāvatī, literally the Happy Place ('Land of Bliss'), Amitāyus' Pure Land in the west.[10] Huiyuan's posthumous prestige in Chinese Buddhism was very great indeed, and it is from the time of the Lushan vow that subsequent devotees date the arrival of Pure Land forms of Buddhism in China. Huiyuan's group was, as Zürcher notes, 'a religious counterpart of the cliques of gentry politicians who monopolized the top functions in the bureaucratic hierarchy'.[11] If one practitioner attained Sukhāvatī earlier than the others, he would return or manifest in some form in order to help the others. The method to be used in treading the path to Amitāyus' Pure Land was to be the *pratyutpanna samādhi*.

We know that subsequently, however, Huiyuan faced some doubts as to how to assess the visions seen as a result of the *pratyutpanna samādhi*. Were they all, in the words of Étienne Lamotte, *de l'autosuggestion pure*? This subject forms one of the topics of Huiyuan's correspondence with Kumārajīva when the latter was in the Chinese capital of Chang'an (405/6 onwards). The problem reflects perhaps a controversy which was already raging, probably again originating from Kashmir, between the partisans of the divine eye and those of the *pratyutpanna samādhi* as the most effective (and easiest) way of seeing the Buddhas.[12] Kumārajīva advised Huiyuan that the experiences gained through the *pratyutpanna samādhi* could be very valuable, although his general attitude seems to have been decidedly lukewarm. All the Buddhas are anyway empty of intrinsic existence, and one should not become attached to these experiences (Tsukamoto 1985: 2, 853–4; Mochizuki 2001: 254–6). It is worth noting that in spite of its importance at this stage in China, the *Pratyutpanna Sūtra* does not appear to have been an important sūtra in the doctrinal development of Indian Buddhism.

One feature which may have contributed to the growth of Pure Land forms of Buddhism in China, however, was a pessimism and consequential spiritual escapism which accompanied the political traumas of the centuries prior to the Tang dynasty (prior to 618 CE). This pessimism was very much felt during the lifetime of Huiyuan, and was renewed during the declining years of the Tang, especially after the rebellion of An Lushan (755–63; see Weinstein 1987: 59 ff.). Moreover, in the centuries during which Buddhism was transmitted to China the doctrine of karma had proved particularly compelling and in a way attractive to the Chinese mind, although it also created a nervousness about the future and a further pessimism about the potential of 'fallen man'. Huiyuan himself was a strict moral disciplinarian. He is said to have died while his fellow monks searched the scriptures in order to find whether it was permissible to give him honey and water to drink. The aged Huiyuan had refused

medicinal alcohol (Zürcher 1972: 253; Kieschnick 1997: 28). There is no doubt that the *Pratyutpanna Sūtra*'s emphasis on morality was one of the factors which attracted him to the sūtra. The other was that it indicated a way of meeting the Buddha, a sage, in order to have questions answered and doubts cleared. To meet a true sage was very difficult in Huiyuan's China.[13] After death Huiyuan hoped for rebirth in the presence of Amitāyus. The Neo-Daoists too sought a life after death living in harmony with Nature (Liebenthal 1955: 50–1). Ascent of the Holy Man to a heavenly abode was very much part of Chinese culture, and Huiyuan's reported description of Sukhāvatī in his biography carries with it the authentic flavour of a Daoist paradise – in spite of the fact that Huiyuan also shows a clear awareness that rebirth in the Buddha's Pure Land is for the purpose of improving facilities for the final attainment of nirvāṇa (Zürcher 1972: 245).

There is another aspect of Pure Land teaching which I suspect made it attractive to the Chinese. The search for longevity had long been a Chinese concern, particularly among Daoist magicians and alchemists. We know of an important later Pure Land scholar, Tanluan (T'an-luan; 476–542, or possibly 488 or 489–554), who sought through Daoist techniques to attain long life in order to devote himself further to the study of Buddhism. According to the traditional account, Tanluan subsequently met an Indian missionary, Bodhiruci. Tanluan put to him a straightforward question:

> 'Is there any Indian Buddhist scripture which is superior to the Taoist [Daoist] scripture, *Book of Immortals*, in the teaching of prolonging life?' Bodhiruci spat on the ground and shouted in anger. 'How dare you say such a thing. The Taoist book is quite insignificant in comparison with Buddhist *sutras*. Where in this country can you find the true teaching of attaining eternal life? By practicing Taoism you may prolong your life beyond the fixed limit, but like other people you must meet death sooner or later . . .'.
>
> (Matsumoto 1986: 37; cf. Corless 1987: 36–8)

Even if through magical means and alchemical elixirs you become a Daoist 'immortal', a deity, still the Buddha saw and taught that as a god you must meet death eventually. And so the cycle of saṃsāra will continue to roll. Bodhiruci taught Tanluan of Amitāyus and his practice (the name means 'Immeasurable Life'). Through the method of Amitāyus one can effectively attain to immortality (Amitāyus and his Pure Land), and also to ultimate liberation, nirvāṇa. In the search for longevity the Buddha's Pure Land was infinitely superior to Daoist magic and the longevity potions which killed at least one Chinese emperor.[14]

The notion of a Buddha Field (*buddhakṣetra*)

From the perspective of Buddhist cosmology space, like time, is infinite. Infinite space is full of infinite universes, world systems, stretching to the 10 directions (the four cardinal points, four intermediate directions, up and down). Within these infinite reaches some universes are known as Buddha Fields or Buddha Lands. Generally, this term denotes an area, a cosmos, where a Buddha exerts his spiritual influence.

The concept of a Buddha Field, while of considerable importance in Mahāyāna thought, is not unique to the Mahāyāna. The *Mahāvastu*, which is a Lokottaravāda text, points out that there are many, many universes or world systems which are devoid of a Buddha, for Buddhas are relatively very rare. Moreover, the *Mahāvastu* notes, there cannot be two Buddhas in the same Buddha Field, for this would imply that one Buddha is not adequate to his task. And even though Buddhas are relatively rare, still, throughout the infinite universes there are innumerable Buddhas, and innumerable tenth-stage Bodhisattvas who are about to become Buddhas. Each leads infinite beings to liberation, and yet there is no chance that eventually all will be liberated and no one will be left. For with infinite sentient beings, even if infinite Buddhas each liberate another infinite being, still there are infinite suffering sentient beings left (*Mahāvastu* 1949–56: I, 96 ff.).

Human beings live in a world sphere called *Sahā*, said to be in the south, for which the current Buddha is Śākyamuni.[15] The notion of a Buddha Field may have arisen from a consideration of Śākyamuni's knowledge on the one hand, the field of his awareness, and his authority and influence on the other – his field of activity.[16] In addition, one can refer to the actual geographical area where the Buddha was born. Naturally the sizes of these three fields are different. The Buddha's knowledge (and from a Mahāyāna perspective, his compassion) is often held in Mahāyāna to be infinite, although his direct spiritual power is exerted over a vast but finite area, his Buddha Field in the primary sense, the area in the centre of which the Buddha appeared.

The principal function of a Buddha is to teach sentient beings in his Buddha Field. But the Buddha Field in this primary sense is not simply a place where the Buddha happens to have appeared. Rather, during his career as a Bodhisattva the Buddha-to-be is said to 'purify' his Buddha Field, and the Buddha Field is in some sense the result of his great compassion (Fujita 1996a: 34–5). In other words, the very existence of a Buddha Field depends upon the Buddha's wonderful career as a Bodhisattva. The Buddha's infinite deeds of wisdom and compassion have created his Buddha Field as an area where he can 'ripen' sentient beings. Beings themselves also contribute, for it is a place where they have been reborn through their deeds, as beings potentially able to be ripened. Moreover, a Bodhisattva can himself be reborn in the Buddha Field of a Buddha, in the Buddha's direct presence, or travel there in meditation. The Buddha Field is precisely a place where conditions are obviously advantageous to his spiritual progress. Thus a Buddha Field is both a place where a Bodhisattva can see the Buddha and pursue his or her career, and also the goal of the Bodhisattva's striving, his own Buddha Field purified for sentient beings through his own efforts (Rowell 1935: 385 ff., 406 ff.). And from his place within his realm one text rather poetically informs us that three times a day, and three times a night, the Buddha surveys his Buddha Field in order to see who can be morally and spiritually helped (Lamotte 1962: 396–7).

So the Bodhisattva purifies his Buddha Field, and the realm within which the Buddha exerts his activity is the result of his purifying deeds as a Bodhisattva. This gives rise to a problem. It is agreed on all counts that the *Sahā* world of Śākyamuni is not a very pure place.[17] This world is indeed a thoroughly impure Buddha Field. Some Mahāyāna texts

speak of three types of Buddha Field: pure, impure, and mixed. For example, in an impure Buddha Field there are non-Buddhists, seriously suffering beings, differences of lineage etc., immoral beings, lower realms such as hells, inferior conduct and Inferior Vehicles (the Mainstream Buddhist traditions), and so on. Bodhisattvas of excellent conduct, and the actual appearance of a Buddha, are rare.[18] In fact this world of Śākyamuni is pretty grim for the pious follower of Mahāyāna. A pure Buddha Field, on the other hand, such as Amitāyus' Sukhāvatī, will be something like this:

> well adorned, having no filth or evil, no tiles or pebbles, no thorns or thistles, no excrement or other impurities. Its soil shall be flat and even, having no high or low, no hills or crevices. It shall have vaiḍūrya ['beryl', following Paul Harrison] for earth, and jewelled trees in rows. With cords made of gold shall its highways be bordered. It shall be everywhere clean and pure, with jewelled flowers scattered about.
>
> (*Lotus Sūtra*, in Hurvitz 1976: 120)

Such a pure Buddha Field – in East Asia it is spoken of as a 'Pure Land' – has a Buddha who lives for a very long time (perhaps for all eternity), who does not abandon his flock, as Śākyamuni appears to have done after only 40 years or so. There are many Bodhisattvas in that realm, and the devil, Māra, and his evil host cannot work their vicious ways. Obviously such a Pure Land is an excellent place for developing the path to enlightenment, while our *Sahā* world, particularly since the death of the Master, is not really so very good. Since there are infinite Buddha Fields and therefore also infinite Pure Lands at this very moment throughout the 10 directions, surely the overriding immediate task must be to visit these Pure Lands if at all possible and eventually to be reborn there.

Earlier Buddhism had taught that merit led to a heavenly rebirth after death, but all heavens are saṃsāra, impermanent and pervaded with final frustration and suffering. A Pure Land is emphatically not, in Buddhist terminology, a heaven (*svarga*).[19] Rather, one should practise the correct meditations (i.e. *buddhānusmṛti*) and skilfully direct the fruit of one's good deeds, merit, to be reborn not in a heaven but in the chosen Pure Land. While it may certainly not be easy to get to a Pure Land, in a Pure Land because of the presence of a Buddha and his teachings one can relatively easily attain nirvāṇa, or significantly advance on the path to Buddhahood, as we know from the stories people were able to do in India at the time of Śākyamuni. Indeed, attaining nirvāṇa in a Pure Land is much easier than it was in India at the time of Śākyamuni, since a Pure Land is much more conducive to practising the Dharma than impure India was and is. Thus, unlike a heaven, from a Pure Land there need be no further uncontrolled saṃsāric rebirth.

This is all quite logical, and perfectly consistent with the development of Buddhist thought. The present world bereft of a Buddha is a difficult place in which to attain enlightenment. Nevertheless, in infinite universes there are still Buddhas, perhaps even Śākyamuni himself. It is possible to see them in meditation, and to hear their wonderful teachings. There is thus nothing to prevent one from being reborn in their presence. Consequently, the quest for nirvāṇa, or even Perfect Buddhahood, requires in most cases the immediate goal of rebirth

in a Pure Land in the presence of a Buddha. In ensuring that he or she will be reborn in a Pure Land after death, the practitioner becomes here and now a 'non-returner' (*anāgāmin*), one who will no longer be reborn in this world, but will attain enlightenment very soon, perhaps in the very next life.[20] This is a very advanced stage of Buddhist practice indeed, much more advanced than most people would normally expect to attain under present conditions in the world as it is now bereft of a Buddha.

But where does this leave poor Śākyamuni? His Buddha Field is impure, therefore Śākyamuni and his purifying activity as a Bodhisattva were obviously strikingly ineffective. To quote from Śāriputra in the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa Sūtra*:

> If the buddha-field is pure only to the extent that the mind of the bodhisattva is pure, then, when Śākyamuni Buddha was engaged in the career of the bodhisattva, his mind must have been impure. Otherwise, how could this buddha-field appear to be so impure?
> (Thurman 1976: 18)

Moreover, Śākyamuni has now gone, while there are still many sentient beings here in this world to be saved. His compassion must therefore be defective.

There are a number of ways in which one can deal with these problems. First, one could simply say that all Buddhas are in fact identical. Śākyamuni appeared to help sentient beings at a particular time and place. Although he has died there are many other Buddhas, and also there are Pure Lands elsewhere. These Buddhas are continuing to help beings in this *Sahā* world. One could combine this with the scheme of the Buddha bodies. Śākyamuni was a Transformation Body, an emanation of another Buddha, who remains in a pure Buddha Field, still active in all ways for the benefit of sentient beings here on earth. In other words, the impure Buddha Field is not the primary Buddha Field, but is a skilful means of a Buddha who necessarily, as a Buddha, really has a Pure Buddha Field. Alternatively this supramundane Buddha could himself be Śākyamuni (as in the *Lotus Sūtra*). Another strategy would be to see the Buddha Field as the range of a Buddha's activity, but not necessarily completely purified by his previous activity. Since he is compassionate, a Buddha creates his Buddha Field as the most suitable place for particular beings to be saved. This strategy was strikingly adopted by the *Karuṇāpuṇḍarīka Sūtra*, a sūtra which sought to restore Śākyamuni to pre-eminence in the face of Pure Land cults centred on Amitāyus and Akṣobhya. These other Buddhas teach sentient beings who can reach their Pure Lands. But the greatest Bodhisattvas, the real Bodhisattvas, vow to appear as Buddhas in *impure* realms, tainted Buddha Fields, out of their great compassion (Yamada 1968: I, 78). The very fact that Śākyamuni appeared in this *Sahā* realm, a ghastly place, indicates his remarkable compassion.

The most common solution to Śāriputra's dilemma, however, and of crucial importance in subsequent East Asian Buddhism, is that given by the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa* itself. This impure Buddha Field is indeed the Pure Land. It only appears impure because of the minds of sentient beings dwelling in it. If there are mountains in this world, and all is flat in the Pure Land, that is because there are mountains in the mind. Śākyamuni is not a deficient Buddha. To him all is pure. The impurity that we see is the result of impure awareness,

and also the Buddha's compassion in creating a world within which impure beings can grow (Thurman 1976: 18–19; cf. Rowell 1937: 142 ff.). Thus the real way to attain a Pure Land is to purify one's own mind. Put another way, we are already in the Pure Land if we but knew it. Whatever the realm, if it is inhabited by people with enlightened pure minds then it is a Pure Land. This is very much like the Buddha-nature/*tathāgatagarbha* assertion that we are already fully-enlightened Buddhas if we but recognize the fact, and it is only a short step from the Chan (Zen) notion that the Pure Land is really simply the tranquil, clear, radiant, pure Mind. The Pure Land is truly, therefore, not a 'heavenly abode' but is rather demythologized as enlightenment itself.[21]

Some Bodhisattvas

Maitreya

The truth that the Buddha discovered and taught was not unique to him. It is the true way of things, and 'whether Tathāgatas arise or do not arise the true way of things remains'. The idea that there were Buddhas previous to Śākyamuni must have originated fairly early, perhaps during the lifetime of the Buddha himself, and it is scarcely a dramatic inference to deduce from this that there will be further Buddhas in the future. Moreover, if there are future Buddhas then the being who is to become the very next Buddha in this world must already exist and be far advanced on his Bodhisattva path. That being is Maitreya (Pali: Metteyya). Maitreya is the only present Bodhisattva with a 'celestial' status accepted by both the Mahāyāna and the Mainstream Buddhist traditions.[22]

A version of the story of Maitreya is contained in a Sanskrit work, the *Maitreyavyākaraṇa*, the *Prediction of Maitreya*, which may also have been an important text in establishing a Mahāyāna cult of Maitreya.[23] Life under the Buddha Maitreya will take place in a type of Buddhist millennium. This time is commonly (but by no means always) thought to be very far in the distant future. At that time gods, men and other beings will worship Maitreya and

> will lose their doubts, and the torrents of their cravings will be cut off: free from all misery they will manage to cross the ocean of becoming; and, as a result of Maitreya's teachings, they will lead a holy life. No longer will they regard anything as their own, they will have no possessions, no gold or silver, no home, no relatives! But they will lead the holy life of chastity under Maitreya's guidance. They will have torn the net of the passions, they will manage to enter into the trances, and theirs will be an abundance of joy and happiness; for they will lead a holy life under Maitreya's guidance.
>
> (Conze 1959: 241)

In a Theravāda context to the present day it is not uncommon to pray to be reborn on this earth at the time when Maitreya descends, there to become a monk and attain enlightenment under his tutelage. Maitreya scriptures were being translated into Chinese from at least the beginning of the fourth century CE[24] and subsequently the story of Maitreya

provided an impetus for quasi-messianic or millenarian movements in China and further East Asia, associated sometimes with leaders who claimed to be prophets or incarnations of Maitreya. The implication is that through appropriate action now, even revolutionary action, the advent of Maitreya might be dramatically hastened. There were apparently nine such movements in China in the fifth and early sixth centuries alone. Their history was often extremely violent, and Maitreya-inspired movements were significant in the fall of the Chinese Yuan (Mongol) dynasty in the mid-fourteenth century.[25] In Japan, the Shingon founder Kūkai (Kōbō Daishi) is supposed still to be in meditation on the top of Mt Kōya awaiting the coming of Maitreya. Following him, other Shingon meditators have died – or not, as the case may be – through a process of intentional self-mummification, turning their very bodies while living into icons or statues on mountains to await the coming of Maitreya.[26] In Mahāyāna sources (in Korea, or in Tibet, for example) it is not uncommon to find Maitreya already referred to as Buddha Maitreya, or Tathāgata Maitreya.

Like Śākyamuni before his final birth, Maitreya now dwells in the Tuṣita heaven awaiting an opportune time to descend to the world. Since Tuṣita is a heavenly realm and not a Pure Land, it is possible from the point of view of both Mahāyāna and Mainstream Buddhist traditions alike to visit there in meditation, and also to be reborn there. Not only this, but Maitreya is close to earth – literally, since Tuṣita is said to be much closer than a Pure Land.[27] Maitreya also visits this world in various forms to save and teach. Perhaps the best-known case is that of Asaṅga, where in the Tibetan version Maitreya takes Asaṅga to Tuṣita and delivers to him a series of texts containing details of the conduct of a Bodhisattva, and the Yogācāra teachings. Perhaps for this reason devotion to Maitreya was a particular concern of those who followed the Yogācāra. In China, for example, Xuanzang vowed to be reborn in Tuṣita with Maitreya, and his translation and popularization of Yogācāra works led to a revival of Maitreya worship in China.[28] Significantly, one monk is said to have been carried to Tuṣita in meditation and there granted the Bodhisattva ordination. Hence through meditative vision the monk realized fully his Mahāyāna identity. According to Faxian, in his account of his travels to India and Sri Lanka, through his powers an Arhat carried a sculptor to Tuṣita. The sculptor examined Maitreya and, on his return, created a colossal statue in a place north of Kashmir, which is said to have emitted light on fast days.[29]

Maitreya's role as a visionary inspirer may be connected once more with the Kashmiri schools of meditation.[30] As we have seen, visions accompany meditation, particularly visualization meditations. Kashmir was a centre of both Mahāyāna and straightforward Mainstream Buddhist teaching. Maitreya was a Bodhisattva acceptable to both perspectives, and it is not suprising therefore that Maitreya seems to have become a 'tutelary deity' of the Kashmiri meditators. It has been suggested also that Mind Only doctrines (Yogācāra) developed precisely in Kashmir, inspired by Maitreya, out of the contemplation of yogic experience (Demiéville 1954: 376 ff.).

Basham has pointed out, on the basis of inscriptions, that the whole phenomenon of particularly great (or 'celestial') Bodhisattvas probably arose in north India. In Gandhāran art during the early centuries CE (which covers an area including Kashmir), Śākyamuni

and Maitreya were apparently the most popular figures portrayed. From Kashmir, devotion to Maitreya spread to Central Asia and China. This spread began under the Kuṣāṇas, who held vast territories in Central Asia. We know that Maitreya was held in particular esteem in Central Asian Buddhism. At least one important Maitreya sūtra may well have been composed at the oasis site of Turfan. Maitreya also seems to have been a patron of missionaries. In Central Asia, Buddhism was in contact with various other cults, and several scholars have sought to connect the figure of Maitreya with Mithras, or posit the influence of Zoroastrianism. In spite of certain Central Asian iconographic features, however, the figure of Maitreya and his role in Buddhism are perfectly comprehensible in terms of the development of Indian Buddhist ideas.[31] It is of course not surprising that the figure of Maitreya was portrayed in Central Asian art in corresponding Central Asian guise.

In China the cult of Maitreya appears to have developed earlier than that of Amitāyus /Amitābha, and to have been for some time a rival to it. Huiyuan's teacher, Dao'an (Tao-an; 312–85), seems to have been pursued constantly by a fear of having distorted the Buddhist scriptures. Maitreya, as the Inspirer of Kashmir, had become the patron saint of exegetes, and Dao'an, together with a few of his disciples, is said to have prayed before an image of Maitreya in order to be reborn in Tuṣita and there receive final clarification of their doubts and uncertainties (Zürcher 1972: 194; cf. Soper 1959: 219). Tsukamoto points out the significance of Maitreya as Śākyamuni's successor in a culture where family and unbroken lineage was of considerable importance (Tsukamoto 1985: 755). It seems likely that Dao'an and his disciples also practised some form of visualization and recollection centred on Maitreya. Once more, we find reference to visions. In 385 CE, Dao'an and his pupils are said to have received a vision of Tuṣita in this very life.

In art Maitreya is frequently portrayed not in the traditional lotus posture but rather seated on a throne in 'Western' fashion with his legs crossed at the ankles.[32] Depiction of Maitreya in his palace in the middle of Tuṣita may well have preceded historically the representation of the Pure Lands and had some influence on it. In Central Asia there are many images and paintings of Maitreya surviving, placed particularly in the space above the door of a shrine, facing the main figure. Maitreya often carries a vase or bottle. Thus as the devotee turns to leave, having circumambulated the shrine, or prostrated to, say, Śākyamuni, he or she is confronted by the Buddha of the Future, awaiting his final birth on earth.[33] Gigantic statues of Maitreya were erected on the trade and pilgrimage routes through Afghanistan and Central Asia to China. It was apparently the custom to erect such a colossal statue on the border of each new country conquered by the faith – bound over to the millennium of Maitreya (Gaulier *et al.* 1976: 11).[34] The custom of constructing such large statues was no doubt influenced by the idea that Maitreya is 80 cubits tall, a statement found in both Sanskrit and Pali sources (cf. Soper 1959: 214, 216). This fact too was witnessed, it seems, by the flying sculptor in Faxian's travelogue.

In Asian art Bodhisattvas are frequently portrayed as princes or princesses, with rich jewellery and robes. They are indeed consecrated to succeed the Buddha as *dharmarāja*, Kings of the Doctrine. An exception to this is the fat, roly-poly 'Laughing Buddha' who is found

in so many Western homes. He too is a Chinese form of Maitreya.[35] As in Central Asia, the Chinese cave sanctuaries also have a number of images of Maitreya. At Dunhuang, for example, there are large painted clay statues instantly identifiable by their 'Western' sitting posture.[36] There is also an impressive painting on silk from Dunhuang (ninth/tenth centuries) in the British Museum, depicting the delights of the world when Maitreya appears as a Buddha. The king and queen can be seen with shaved heads, renouncing the world to become enlightened under Maitreya's tutelage. Wedding feasts, ploughing and reaping are old, pre-Buddhist devices for indicating a true age of plenty, the golden age of the past which is yet to come anew.[37]

Avalokiteśvara

In his (or her) different forms Avalokiteśvara is perhaps the most popular of all Mahāyāna Bodhisattvas.[38] Like Maitreya, Mañjuśrī and the others he is a Bodhisattva of the elevated tenth stage. It is by no means clear how early a practical cult of Avalokiteśvara appeared 'on the ground' in India. On archaeological and epigraphic grounds it may have been as late as the fifth century CE.[39] But we have looked already at one of the earliest literary sources for his cult, the Avalokiteśvara chapter of the *Lotus Sūtra*. This chapter frequently circulated as a separate sūtra in its own right. It describes how calling to mind Avalokiteśvara will save from numerous sufferings – fire, rivers, storms on the ocean, murderers, demons and ghosts, prison (whether one be guilty or innocent), and also robbers.[40] It can remove moreover lust, anger and stupidity and lead to the birth of sons or daughters to those who wish for them. As an advanced Bodhisattva, through his skill-in-means Avalokiteśvara can also appear in manifold different forms, whichever is most suitable for aiding, converting and saving sentient beings. If a Buddha form is suitable, then he appears as a Buddha; if a Hearer form, as a Hearer; if a god, then as a god. He appears as a householder, or as a monk; as a nun, boy, girl or non-human. According to one Tibetan tale he appeared in the form of a cuckoo so that the birds too could hear the teaching of the Buddha. Tibetans also commonly say that he appears among them in the form of the Dalai Lama.[41] Avalokiteśvara comes to be seen as the most wonderful compassionate saviour of the universe, constantly and tirelessly acting with all the powers of a tenth-level Bodhisattva for the benefit of all sentient beings without discrimination. As such, Avalokiteśvara is said to be the veritable incarnation of all the Buddhas' compassion, their essence, and very reason for being.[42] As compassion incarnate, Avalokiteśvara is held to be concerned not only with enlightenment but with all the little sufferings of everyday life. Avalokiteśvara is a divine being to whom one can pray for aid and consolation.[43] Faxian, on his long and dangerous journey to and from India, describes how he prayed earnestly to Avalokiteśvara to save him from shipwreck, and also to save him from his travelling companions, who wanted to cast him adrift on a desert island as a bringer of bad luck.

The salvific powers of Avalokiteśvara are often depicted in Sino-Japanese art, frequently as block-print illustrations to popular tales concerning the Bodhisattva's miraculous

interventions.[44] An ink and colour painting on silk from Dunhuang, dated 910 CE, portrays Avalokiteśvara with attendants, together with an inscription beseeching that the empire might be peaceful, that the Wheel of Doctrine perpetually turn in China, and that the donor's elder sister, teacher and deceased parents may be reborn in the Pure Land (Zwalf 1985: 219). The Pure Land referred to here is Sukhāvatī, the Pure Land of Amitāyus, since Avalokiteśvara is also spoken of in the various Amitāyus sūtras as one of the two Bodhisattvas who conduct the dead into the presence of Amitāyus. For this reason Avalokiteśvara is frequently portrayed in Buddhist art with a seated figure of Buddha Amitāyus (Amitābha) on his head, and is sometimes spoken of as an emanation of Amitāyus.[45] Block-prints of Avalokiteśvara, together with a text in his honour, have been found in some quantity at Dunhuang, and it seems likely that these were used as protective talismans.

Apart from the *Lotus Sūtra*, one of the other principal Indian sources for the Avalokiteśvara cult is the *Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra*. This text is entirely devoted to recounting and praising the miraculous deeds of the Bodhisattva. Avalokiteśvara descends into hell in order to save the suffering hell-beings. The hot hells immediately become cool, lotuses appear, the torture cauldrons burst asunder. Hell is well and truly harrowed.[46] The Bodhisattva is praised as having 1,000 arms and 11 heads, an important iconographic feature of one form of Avalokiteśvara. Quite extraordinarily, it is also suggested that Avalokiteśvara created the world and all the Hindu gods with it:

> From his eyes arose the moon and sun, from his forehead Maheśvara [Śiva], from his shoulders Brahmā, from his heart Nārāyaṇa [Viṣṇu], from his teeth Sarasvatī, from his mouth the winds, from his feet the earth, and from his belly Varuṇa. When these gods were born from the body of Avalokiteśvara, then he said to the god Maheśvara, 'Thou shalt be Maheśvara in the Kālī age, when the world of evil creatures arises. Thou shalt be called Ādideva (the primal god), the creator, the maker. . . .'
>
> (Thomas 1952: 76–7)

Avalokiteśvara places the Hindu gods in their places, they rule by his permission. There is undoubtedly an iconographical and quite possibly an historical connection of Avalokiteśvara with the Hindu god Śiva.[47] We have seen already that Avalokiteśvara bestows upon Śiva his place in the Hindu pantheon. Nevertheless, Avalokiteśvara himself is also called Maheśvara in the *Kāraṇḍavyūha* – Great Lord, a standard epithet of Śiva. He is described as 'a beautiful man . . . wearing a diadem on his matted hair, his mind filled with the highest friendliness, and looking like a disc of gold' (Thomas 1952: 74). This could be a description of Śiva, for whom the matted hair is a symbol as Lord of the Yogins. In a lovely Kashmiri brass sculpture from *c*. 1000 CE, Avalokiteśvara is shown seated on Potalaka, his mountain home, with matted hair and deer. Behind is what initially looks very much like Śiva's trident. Śiva too dwells in the mountains as a yogin, and is associated with animals in his role of Lord of the Animals. Elsewhere Avalokiteśvara is described as 'blue-throated', a term for Śiva embedded in Śaivite mythology.[48] Śiva too could hence find himself worshipped as a Bodhisattva (as indeed can Viṣṇu; Gellner 1992: 79, 95).

In spite of his obvious links with the Brāhmanic god Śiva, in Nepal where Avalokiteśvara is a particularly important figure Hindus also sometimes identify Avalokiteśvara with Kṛṣṇa. Correspondingly it is common for Newar Buddhists in Nepal to worship Hindu gods holding that they are 'really worshipping Avalokiteśvara' (Gellner 1992: 81, 95). This is one way by which Buddhism to the present day in Nepal can survive in a dominant Hindu environment, and may well suggest a process that occurred in past centuries in India too. And yet in the *Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra* Avalokiteśvara declares: 'I am no god, but a man, and have become a bodhisattva, having compassion on the abandoned and wretched, and a teacher of the way of enlightenment' (Thomas 1951: 191). Avalokiteśvara travels to Sri Lanka to save the demons who dwell there. In Benares (Varanasi) he hums the Doctrine in the form of a bee in order to save thousands of worms. Elsewhere he reveals his great *mantra*, the utterance which articulates and invokes his very being: *oṃ maṇipadme hūṃ*.[49]

Avalokiteśvara's mountain of Potalaka is frequently said to be somewhere in the south of India, but in China it was identified from at least the tenth century with Putuo (P'u-t'o) Shan, a mountain island off the Chinese coast.[50] According to Chinese legend this is where Avalokiteśvara attained enlightenment. The temples and monasteries of Putuo Shan form the centre of the Avalokiteśvara cult and pilgrimage in East Asian Buddhism. As with other Chinese sacred mountains associated with Buddhist and Daoist divinities, simple block-printed tourist guides were produced, praising the relevant deity and indicating the best routes up the mountain and the principal temples and other sites.[51] Two statues in the monasteries at Putuo Shan were particularly famous and sacred. The first was a marble statue with an enormous head, swathed in a cape and hood, emphasizing the tranquil yet compassionate face of the Bodhisattva. The other was a breathtakingly beautiful bronze statue of 'White-Robed Avalokiteśvara', festooned with items of fabric as garments, as is also frequently the custom with Tibetan statues. Avalokiteśvara is crowned, wears large earrings and a rosary, and in the elaborate halo are other small Bodhisattvas which emanate from him. Or her? According to Ernst Boerschmann, 'The face is very noble and kind, but without smiling', and 'She is a real Indian princess, proud and beautiful' (quoted in Oort 1986: II, 13; see also his illustrations).

In East Asia, Avalokiteśvara has changed sex. It is not totally clear why or exactly how early this began to happen, although it may have had something to do with absorption into the figure of Avalokiteśvara of Chinese female deities.[52] D. T. Suzuki implies that the male version of Avalokiteśvara is the 'doctrinal' Bodhisattva, while the female is the 'popular' version (Suzuki 1935: 341). This is scarcely very helpful or convincing. A Northern Song dynasty (960–1127) painting shows Avalokiteśvara (known in China as Guanyin; in Japanese: Kwannon or Kannon) with a moustache, and in this form he was also portrayed at Dunhuang. Nevertheless, we have seen that 'he' could manifest in female form. Although cases are found earlier, in China the transformation seems to have taken place definitively during the Song dynasty (tenth–thirteenth centuries), and it was complete by the sixteenth century. Which is the real form? Obviously neither male nor female. Each is taken according to needs and circumstances.[53] Or, put another way, in 'his' true nature, as a Chinese poem has it, Avalokiteśvara is sexless:

> The Dharma-body of Kuan-yin [Guanyin]
> Is neither male nor female.
> Even the body is not a body,
> What attributes can there be? . . .
> Let it be known to all Buddhists:
> Do not cling to form.
> The bodhisattva is *you*:
> Not the picture or the image.
> (Tay 1976: 173)

Truly, the Bodhisattva is the Buddha-nature, which is equally in all sentient beings. In spite of this, the female form of Avalokiteśvara has provided some of the most attractive stories in Buddhist folk literature (Blofeld 1977), and some of the most beautiful works in the world of religious art. Among the various forms of Guanyin, all female, we find the Guanyin 'Giver of Children' – the so-called 'Chinese Madonna and Child' – or the 'Lion's Roar' Guanyin, seated on the back of a playful Chinese lion, or the Guanyin 'Holder of the Lotus', reflecting the old versions of Avalokiteśvara Padmapāṇi found in India, most notably in the extraordinarily beautiful painting in Cave I at Ajaṇṭā (Gupta period, sixth century).[54] In this painting Avalokiteśvara is at once male and female, with broad shoulders and a soft face, epitomizing compassion, gentleness, and yet inner strength, a willingness and ability to help. There is also Guanyin 'Holder of the Willow Branch', and many figures of Guanyin holding the slender-necked vase containing the elixir of immortality. But the East Asian Guanyin *par excellence* is probably the swirling porcelain White-Robed Guanyin.[55] From Japan, where there are many places of pilgrimage sacred to Kannon; there is a famous wooden statue carved from a single block of camphor wood; and also a striking wooden figure from the fourteenth century in which the wood itself is gilded, and then gilt-bronze, crystal and semi-precious stones are used for the detail and trappings, most notably an ornate 'spiky' headdress and halo. Both these figures appear to be male, although the female Kannon is also popular. On a hill south-east of Tokyo was erected in the late 1950s an enormous Kannon, more than 50 metres high, to serve as a war memorial. It is possible to ascend the statue and observe the view from a viewing platform in the crook of her protective arms.[56]

Eleven-headed forms of Avalokiteśvara were popular in Central Asia and China during the seventh and eighth centuries, while 11-headed, 1,000-armed Avalokiteśvara, together with a four-armed version, are still the most popular forms in Tibetan Buddhism. In his four-armed version Avalokiteśvara (who in Tibetan Buddhism is always depicted as male) is shown seated in the lotus posture, a deer skin over his left shoulder, with two palms pressed together holding a wish-fulfilling jewel, his other right hand holding a rosary and his left a lotus. He is white in colour. He smiles, irradiating his devotee with compassion, a compassion the devotee seeks to generate in himself as he transcends the outer form and realizes his own nature as that of Avalokiteśvara.

One last point. Do all these Bodhisattvas really exist, or are they simply teaching devices of the Buddha, for the benefit of those who are at a particular level on the spiritual path? The answer is both – or neither. From a Buddhist point of view these beings do not *really* exist, they are empty of intrinsic existence, or products of the mind. But then, so are we all. The Bodhisattvas like Avalokiteśvara are as real as we are. On the level of their unreality there is enlightenment, and no one to be enlightened. But on the level of our unenlightened state they are real enough – and as unenlightened beings we need all the help we can get.

Tārā

As far as I know, all the forms of Avalokiteśvara found in Indo-Tibetan Buddhism are male. The feminine aspect of compassion is more than adequately fulfilled, however, by Tārā. In particular, devotion to Tārā is a hallmark of Buddhism in Tibet and those areas influenced by Tibet, and is also very important in Nepalese Newar Buddhism.[57]

Tārā too dwells on the Potalaka mountain, for she is closely associated with the figure of Avalokiteśvara. Like Avalokiteśvara, Tārā appears to have Śaivite elements in her tradition and iconography.[58] According to a popular Tibetan legend Avalokiteśvara despaired of saving so many sentient beings, even with a 1,000 arms and 11 heads. The task was so great that he wept, and from a teardrop of compassion Tārā was born to help him: 'So there is not a being, no matter how insignificant, whose suffering is not seen by Avalokiteśvara or by Tārā, and who cannot be touched by their compassion' (Hyde-Chambers and Hyde-Chambers 1981: 6; slightly modified). According to another, more 'literary' version, Tārā was born from a blue lotus which grew in his tears. Either way, her real origin lies in her development of *bodhicitta* and her cultivation of the Bodhisattva path over many aeons. Particularly significant is her vow in response to the suggestion that she should change sex in order to develop further along the path to enlightenment:

> There are many who desire Enlightenment in a man's body, but none who work [*sic.*] for the benefit of sentient beings in the body of a woman. Therefore, until saṃsāra is empty, I shall work for the benefit of sentient beings in a woman's body.
>
> (Tāranātha, in Willson 1986: 34)

Tibetans are now quite happy to refer to Tārā as a fully-enlightened female Buddha.

There are no major Tārā sūtras, although there is a *Tārā Tantra* which is relatively late.[59] As far as we can tell at the moment, Tārā first appears in Indian Buddhist art during the sixth century, together with Avalokiteśvara and expressing his compassion. In the *Tārā Tantra* and elsewhere she is also said to be the 'Mother of all the Buddhas', in spite of the fact that she is held to be perpetually 16 years old – old but yet young. This suggests an absorption with the earlier image of the deity Prajñāpāramitā, also female, and therefore with emptiness itself.[60] By the seventh century Tārā is established as a deity in her own right, and is said in particular to save from eight great fears: lions, elephants, fires, snakes, bandits, captivity, shipwreck and demons. She has clearly taken over here some of the functions of Avalokiteśvara.[61]

The great importance of Tārā in Tibetan Buddhism is perhaps due to the enthusiastic advocacy of her cause by Atiśa, the eleventh-century Bengali missionary to Tibet. Tārā was Atiśa's personal chosen deity, and she is said to have intervened at a number of crucial points in his life. Atiśa consulted her before going to Tibet. We are told that she predicted that if he went his life would be shorter, but he would benefit numerous beings. Atiśa wrote a brief praise of Tārā (Willson 1986: 293–4), but one of the most impressive praises of the Bodhisattva is the fervent prayer by the nineteenth-century Tibetan lama bLo bzang bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan (pronounced: Lo zang ten pay gyel tsen), in which he shows despair at the usual channels of religious activity and inspiration, and a deep, loving devotion to his chosen deity:

> I call the jewels as witness – from not just my mouth,
> But the depth of my inmost heart and bones, I pray –
> Think of me somewhat! Show me your smiling face!
> Loving One, grant me the nectar of Your Speech!
> (Willson 1986: 324)

Iconographically, Tārā has a number of forms. Tibetan iconography is very complex and strict, since the images are of crucial importance in tantric meditation. Twenty-one forms of Tārā are commonly referred to in Tibetan Buddhism, and these are hymned in the most frequent of chants to Tārā.[62] In general, however, the most frequent forms found are the Green and White Tārās. The Green is the principal form of Tārā, seated on a moon resting on a lotus, with left leg drawn up, and the foot of the right leg on a lotus 'footstool'. She is adorned with all the ornaments and trappings of a Bodhisattva, very beautiful, and her left hand in front of her heart holds the stem of a blue lotus, while the right arm and hand are extended, palm open, as if handing down blessings. Sometimes this hand too holds a blue lotus. Sūryagupta, a ninth-century Kashmiri scholar, cries out to her:

> Homage! Whose right hand grants boons to beings,
> Blue lotus in left; complete with all ornaments,
> Graceful, with shining blue-green complexion,
> Youthful, wide-eyed and full-breasted.'
> (Willson 1986: 139)

The White Tārā is generally associated in Tibetan Buddhism with long-life practices. She is seated in the full lotus position, white in colour, with her left hand at her heart holding the stem of a white lotus. Her right arm and hand are again extended, bestowing blessings. She is easily recognized, since she has seven eyes, three on her face, and one in each palm and foot.

Mañjuśrī

Just as Avalokiteśvara is said to incarnate all the Buddhas' compassion, so Mañjuśrī manifests the other 'wing' of enlightenment – wisdom. Of course, both are tenth-stage

Bodhisattvas and in reality have equal attainments. But just as Avalokiteśvara is met performing heroic deeds of compassion in the *Lotus Sūtra*, Mañjuśrī is particularly associated with the role of interlocutor on questions concerning ultimate truth in such sūtras as the *Vimalakīrtinirtinirdeśa*. Like Tarā, on the other hand, Mañjuśrī is said to be ever young, a youth of 16, a 'crown prince' who is nevertheless ancient in wisdom. Mañjuśrī is not important in the earlier Prajñāpāramitā, but he does play a significant role in the *Saptaśatikā Prajñāpāramitā*,[63] and an important text for the cult of Mañjuśrī, the *Mañjuśrībuddhakṣetraguṇavyūha*, had already been translated into Chinese by the end of the third century. According to Paul Harrison the very early Lokakṣema corpus of texts translated into Chinese 'reflect the emergence of Mañjuśrī as an important archetypal *bodhisattva* figure by the middle of the second century C.E.'.[64] In Indian Buddhist art, on the other hand, Mañjuśrī appears relatively late (from about the fifth century). It is possible that any actual *cult* of Mañjuśrī originated in Central Asia (Khotan?) or even China. In China he is portrayed with Vimalakīrti, the lay Bodhisattva with whom he has a profound discussion in the *Vimalakīrtinirtinirdeśa*, from the sixth century onwards.[65] Apparently the association of Mañjuśrī with Wutai (Wu-t'ai) Shan in north China was known in classical times in India itself, identified by Chinese scholars with the mountain in the 'north-east' (when seen from India or Central Asia) referred to as the abode of Mañjuśrī in the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*.[66] There are said to have been pilgrimages from India and other Asian countries to Wutai Shan by the seventh century.[67] Several Mongol and Manchu Chinese emperors were officially recognized by their Tibetan lamas such as 'Phags pa (pronounced: 'Pakpa') and the Fifth Dalai Lama as emanations of Mañjuśrī.[68] In Nepal, Mañjuśrī is associated with the origins of Newar Buddhist civilization through a legend whereby he drained a lake to form the Kathmandu valley.[69]

According to the 25,000-verse *Perfection of Wisdom*, a Bodhisattva who has reached the tenth stage is to be known, quite simply, as a Tathāgata – which is to say, a Buddha. Although he is not a Buddha, from our side he (or she) is so amazing that we could not distinguish him from a Buddha. In the *Mañjuśrībuddhakṣetraguṇavyūha* we are told how Mañjuśrī many, many aeons ago gave rise to the *bodhicitta* in the presence of a previous Buddha. In producing the *bodhicitta* he made a series of vows. He would always act for the benefit of sentient beings, without greed, miserliness or resentfulness. He would always observe complete morality and be perfectly pure. Moreover, most significantly, Mañjuśrī would never wish to attain a rapid (self-seeking) enlightenment (*bodhi*), but rather would continue to benefit sentient beings 'until the end of future'.[70] He would purify an immense, inconceivable Buddha Field, and would cause his name to be known throughout the 10 directions.

Mañjuśrī has now attained the tenth stage of a Bodhisattva. He is asked why he does not proceed straightway to full Buddhahood. The reply is that in fully understanding emptiness and acting accordingly there is nothing more to do. He has let go of the notion of full Buddhahood. He no longer seeks enlightenment; indeed, in the light of emptiness he cannot attain enlightenment (Chang 1983: 170 ff., 177–8, 183). In saying this, of course, Mañjuśrī indicates that he is already fully enlightened. According to the *Aṅgulimālīya Sūtra*,

Mañjuśrī is now actually a Buddha, with a Buddha Field (Lamotte 1960: 29–30). We have seen that a tenth-stage Bodhisattva can manifest in whatever way he or she wishes for the benefit of beings. In an important section of the *Śūraṃgamasamādhi Sūtra*, a work first translated into Chinese perhaps towards the end of the second century, Mañjuśrī is said to have been in the past a Buddha, who manifested all the deeds of a Buddha and finally entered nirvāṇa – or so it seemed. Nevertheless, in so doing the great Bodhisattvas do not give up their (compassionate) nature as Bodhisattvas, and in entering final nirvāṇa they have not in fact completely disappeared and abandoned sentient beings.[71] The same point is made in a short sūtra which may depend upon the *Śūraṃgamasamādhi*, known as the *Mañjuśrīparinirvāṇa Sūtra* (translated into Chinese at the end of the third century). Mañjuśrī, through his meditative power, many times manifests entry into final nirvāṇa (*parinirvāṇa*) in different regions, and even leaves holy relics behind. All this is for the benefit of beings. He emanates as many Buddhas as are needed, but he can also manifest as a poor wretch, in order that beings can make merit through compassion and donations. Immense benefits arise from seeing even an image of Mañjuśrī, and also pronouncing his name. Through such practices beings will be freed from the lower realms (Lamotte 1960: 35–9). According to a Chinese tradition, Mañjuśrī vowed to take the same form as every pilgrim who visits his sacred mountain of Wutai. Thus he could appear even as a thief or gambler. An important abbot and Chan monk of recent times, Xuyun (Hsü-yün; dates said to be 1840–1959) tells how he was helped on his arduous pilgrimage by a beggar whom he later realized to be Mañjuśrī himself.[72] Various scholars in Buddhist history are said to have seen and received visionary inspiration from Mañjuśrī, most notably, perhaps, Tsong kha pa, and Mañjuśrī is said in Tibet to be the inspirer of the profound wisdom teachings of the Mādhyamika.

According to one relatively early Mahāyāna sūtra, Śākyamuni Buddha disclosed that in the past he was a disciple of Mañjuśrī, and his very status as a Buddha is now due to Mañjuśrī, who is both father and mother to innumerable Buddhas.[73] Mañjuśrī, is, of course, wisdom incarnate, and one remembers here both Prajñāpāramitā and Tārā as 'mother of all the Buddhas'. He is referred to by one scholar, appropriately named Mañjuśrīmitra (late seventh/early eighth centuries), as 'the errorless comprehension of the character of *bodhicitta*, the birthplace of all the Buddhas' (*Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti* 1985: 8). The supremacy of Mañjuśrī is stated repeatedly in one of the most important texts on Mañjuśrī used for chanting in Tibetan Buddhism, the tantric *Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti*. Mañjuśrī 'holds the enlightenment of a fully enlightened Buddha' (*ibid.*: 8: 42). He is the fully awakened, supreme, omniscient one (*ibid.*: 9: 15). He is the progenitor of all the Buddhas, and at the same time their most excellent son (*ibid.*: 6: 19). Mañjuśrī is master (*indra*) of the gods, and god of gods (*ibid.*: 10: 6), who dwells in the mind of all beings (*ibid.*: 9: 20).

At this sublime point, however, let us note that just as in India early Mahāyāna may have been characterized by cultic practices centred on certain sūtras, and certain meditative absorptions, so it was very likely also marked by groups centred on different and often rival Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. In one lovely sūtra, Mañjuśrī is bettered in a discourse on wisdom by an 8-year-old girl.[74] She had been treading the Bodhisattva path for 60 aeons when Mañjuśrī

made his vows. Her future Buddha Field will be – oh, *so* much better than that of Mañjuśrī (Chang 1983: 93–4). Still, Mañjuśrī's Buddha Field is said elsewhere to be much better than Sukhāvatī (*ibid.*: 183–4). So there!

The iconography of Mañjuśrī is a relatively late development. In Indo-Tibetan Buddhism he is usually represented as a young prince, seated on a lotus, with a sword in his right hand, held above his head, and a book in the left. Sometimes in the left hand he holds the stem of a lotus, and the book is placed on the lotus behind his left shoulder. The sword is said to be the sword of gnosis which cuts aside the bonds of ignorance. The book is the *Prajñāpāramitā*, usually held in Tibet to be the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā* version.

In Sino-Japanese art in particular, and Central Asian art which is influenced by China, Mañjuśrī rides on a lion, and often parallels Samantabhadra, the Bodhisattva of the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*, who rides an enormous six-tusked elephant. The two bodhisattvas are found placed either side of the Buddha Vairocana to form a triad. Because of the importance of the *Avataṃsaka* in East Asian Buddhism, and also because of his role as a guardian of the *Lotus Sūtra*, Samantabhadra has a significant place as a cult figure in Sino-Japanese Buddhism. In China he too is given a sacred mountain, this time Emei (Omei) Shan in Sichuan province.[75]

A block-print of Mañjuśrī and lion from Dunhuang (tenth century) makes clear the association of Mañjuśrī with Wutai Shan, where apparently the oldest wooden temple buildings in China (782–897) still stand (Zwalf 1985: 230). A lovely Chinese ink painting from the fourteenth century depicts a long-haired, relaxed Mañjuśrī reading a scroll (the *Perfection of Wisdom*?), seated on a sleepy but perhaps slightly peeved lion.[76] A statue of Mañjuśrī from Dazu (Ta-tsu), in Sichuan (1154), also depicts him on his lion – a Chinese lion that looks facially more like a giant Pekingese dog, dogs which were bred precisely to look like Mañjuśrī's lion. In Mañjuśrī's left hand is the book. The sword seems more often than not to be missing in Sino-Japanese art (Oort 1986: 2, plate 23a).

Kṣitigarbha

Although known, the Bodhisattva Kṣitigarbha is little more than a name in Indo-Tibetan Buddhism. In East Asia, on the other hand, from the Tang dynasty (seventh century) onwards he has been extremely important.[77] He too has a sacred mountain in China, Mt Jiuhua (Chiu-hua), in Anhui province of eastern China. According to the *Daśacakrakṣitigarbha Sūtra*, a sūtra which was almost certainly composed in Central Asia, Kṣitigarbha was given the particular task of saving sentient beings during the period between the death of Śākyamuni and the coming of Maitreya. Iconographic evidence from Central Asia suggests that Kṣitigarbha may well have appeared originally in the retinue of Maitreya as one of his monk attendants.

The real reason for Kṣitigarbha's importance in East Asian Buddhism, however, is probably his central role in the *Dizangpusa benyingjing* (*Ti-tsang p'u-sa pen-ying Ching*; **Kṣitigarbhabodhisattvapraṇidhāna Sūtra*?), a sūtra which seems to be of Chinese or just possibly Khotanese origin, and is not known in any Tibetan version. A principal theme of this

work is filial piety, and particularly the deeds of Kṣitigarbha (known in Chinese as Dizang (Ti-tsang)) in saving the dead from even the lowest hells. Holmes Welch has pointed out that the notion of rebirth, and consequently of the hell realms, was introduced into Chinese thought during an age of turmoil, when many Chinese must have entertained a consideration that the political and social upheavals of the age might have something to do with their inadequate treatment of the ancestors (Welch 1967: 182). Inadequate indeed, for the poor Chinese had not realized that their nearest and dearest could be, in fact probably were, in hell. Hence the acute problem of how to save them. Charity begins at home; the universal compassion of the Bodhisattva starts with a little compassion for one's suffering family. Thus Kṣitigarbha in Chinese Buddhism became associated in particular with rituals that can be performed by those who remain behind for the welfare of their ancestors – rituals such as reciting the *Dizangbenying* sūtra and bestowing the merit on the ancestors, or placing the name of an ancestor or an urn containing the ashes at regular intervals on a temple shrine to Kṣitigarbha, prostrating, burning incense, and perhaps holding a short service (Welch 1967: 188, 204). If all else fails, the Bodhisattva can argue on behalf of those in hell, and try to get for them more lenient treatment (Teiser 1988a: 14; 1994: 6).

A Chinese story contained in a manuscript from Dunhuang tells how the monk Daoming (Tao-ming) dies only to find it was a bureaucratic error (same name, wrong person – a common motif in such stories) and he is sent back to life. However, while in the lower regions the monk meets Kṣitigarbha. He does not recognize the Bodhisattva, since Kṣitigarbha is portrayed among the living in a different and, it seems, inaccurate manner. Kṣitigarbha asks that Daoming observe him very carefully, so that as a result of the vision he can transmit an accurate picture of him. Moreover, Daoming should encourage people to say a mantra devoted to Kṣitigarbha. All who do so, or see his accurate portrayal, or meet him in hell, will be saved from the infernal regions, since Kṣitigarbha presides over the 10 kings of hell. Resting at his side Daoming is surprised to see a lion. That, Kṣitigarbha tells him, is Mañjuśrī.[78]

In the *Dizangbenying* sūtra Śākyamuni explains the immense power to save possessed by Kṣitigarbha.[79] To hear his powerful name, praise and worship him, make offerings to or an image of him, will lead to a heavenly rebirth and freedom from the lower realms (Hua 1974b: 72). The misdeeds of 30 aeons can be wiped out (*ibid*.: 146). This is possible because of Kṣitigarbha's great power developed during his Bodhisattva path as a direct result of his compassionate vows. In two stories we are told that Kṣitigarbha was, in a previous life, a woman who vowed to save all sentient beings in the lower realms, in return or out of gratitude for the salvation of her mother who had been reborn in great suffering (*ibid*.: 88, 126). All sentient beings are in reality our mothers. Here, in this Chinese source, we find that Kṣitigarbha has vowed not to become a Buddha until he has saved all other creatures (*ibid*.: 72, 120). Reciting the sūtra is said to save from illnesses, or it can be recited for the dead, or for ancestors who have become ghosts. They will straightway receive favourable rebirths, through the immense merit of the Bodhisattva Kṣitigarbha (*ibid*.: 157–9, 210–11). Many ways of helping the dead are indicated. Kṣitigarbha will pull from the very gates of hell those who can recite the name of a Buddha, or a Bodhisattva, or a verse from a sūtra.[80] Through reciting the *Dizangbenying* sūtra itself one can also command the spirits and cause good

fortune to those about to be born, the newly born, as well as the mother and family (*ibid.*: 161–2; cf. 183). Reciting the name of Kṣitigarbha and contemplating his image overcomes poverty and protects while on travel. Indeed, worshipping Kṣitigarbha can even increase intelligence and improve memory (*ibid.*: 211–13). In other words, Kṣitigarbha is of value in everyday life and everyday death, as a good Bodhisattva should be. In particular, he is a Chinese Bodhisattva who offers practical spiritual solutions to the domestic problems of Chinese men and women. To the present day, in the seventh lunar month, the *Dizangbenyingjing* is recited, and offerings are made, out of gratitude for Kṣitigarbha's saving of the ancestors.

In Japan probably sometime between 1000 and 1300 another apocryphal scripture was created (based in part on a Chinese model), called the 'Scripture Spoken by the Buddha on the Causes of Bodhisattva Jizō [Kṣitigarbha] Giving Rise to the Thought of Enlightenment and the Ten Kings' (*Bussetsu jizō bosatsu hosshin innen jūō kyō*). This sūtra elaborates further on the different courts of the 10 kings, the horrible sufferings of the dead in hell, and Kṣitigarbha's vows and salvific abilities. It also describes the delights of a Pure Land attributed to Kṣitigarbha (Teiser 1994: 58 ff.). In Japan Kṣitigarbha has the same function as in China, but is also associated with the welfare of children, pregnant women, childbirth and, since the twelth century, travellers. The basis for these associations can be seen in the *Dizangbenying* sūtra itself. In particular Kṣitigarbha (Japanese: Jizō) loves children. If a child dies, say by infanticide (in previous centuries, often connected with grinding poverty), miscarriage or abortion, an appropriate ritual and small image of Jizō may be offered at a local temple in the hope that Jizō will help the dead child and also in order to avoid any unpleasant effects from the child's spirit.[81]

Pictures of Kṣitigarbha carrying out his salvific functions may be found used in Buddhist funerary rituals. In art he is commonly represented as a shaven-headed monk, an exception to the general depiction of Bodhisattvas as princes or princesses. In this form Kṣitigarbha appears as a guide of the dead from the lower realms to higher states. In a tenth-century wall painting from Bezeklik in Central Asia, Kṣitigarbha is depicted with a patched robe, and a staff with which to strike open the gates of hell.[82] He has almost exactly the same appearance – a dignified yet kindly monk, floating in the air with feet on a lotus, in robes, perhaps even rich robes, with a staff, a small medicine bowl, and halo – in numerous Japanese paintings, where the descent of Jizō to save beings is an important artistic theme. His staff is that of a wandering mendicant. The metal frame at the end, like an upside-down heart of wire, contains six rings which tinkle as he moves. He is surrounded by wispy vapour rising from the cauldrons of hell, as he compassionately descends to save those who suffer unspeakable torments.[83]

Some Buddhas

Akṣobhya

Our principal literary source for the mythology of Akṣobhya and any cult it might have involved is the *Akṣobhyavyūha Sūtra*, although further information is found in the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā*

Prajñāpāramitā and the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa Sūtra*. The *Akṣobhyavyūha* exists in more than one recension, of which the earliest was translated into Chinese towards the end of the second century CE. In terms of antiquity of translation, therefore, this makes it one of the earliest datable Mahāyāna sūtras. As such it may well show an early textual stage in the development of the Pure Land tradition, a stage subsequently extended and elaborated in connection with the traditions centred on Amitābha/Amitāyus and Sukhāvatī that gradually eclipsed it (see Nattier 2000: 73, 79–80). The *Akṣobhyavyūha* was possibly written originally not in Sanskrit but in Gāndhārī, the local language of north-west India under the Kuṣāṇas (Dantinne 1983: 1).

According to the *Akṣobhyavyūha Sūtra* there is in the east, far, far away, a Buddha Field named Abhirati.[84] In that world-system, long ago, a monk vowed to follow the path to full Buddhahood. In so doing he made, as is the custom, a series of great vows which are very difficult to fulfil, stressing his future Bodhisattva practices. In following the path he would never in any way bear malice, never retreat into the lower Vehicles, never engage in even the slightest immorality. As a monk he would always be the most perfect monk, austere, eloquent, dignified, mindful in the presence of women, not listening to non-Buddhist doctrines and so on. This applies not just to the present life but to all lives, with body, speech and mind. He would always save criminals about to be punished, even at the cost of his own life.[85] This account of the Bodhisattva's vows, particularly his perfect morality, is important. First, it indicates the scope of Akṣobhya's aspirations. Second, through adhering to mighty vows the Bodhisattva, and eventual Buddha, gains great, immeasurable merit, and as a direct consequence immense power to help others. Finally, as the text itself makes clear, the purity of the Bodhisattva's morality has a direct bearing on the purity of his eventual Buddha Field. Akṣobhya's realm of Abhirati is, after all, a fully-qualified Pure Land.

As a consequence of his great aspiration and vows this Bodhisattva was predicted to full enlightenment, a prediction accompanied by suitably wonderful miracles. After extraordinary exertions over a phenomenal length of time all has now come to pass, and he is indeed the Buddha Akṣobhya, who reigns over that land of Abhirati far, far distant in the east.[86] At Akṣobhya's enlightenment Māra did not even bother to try and hinder him. The sūtra devotes some time to describing the delights of Akṣobhya's Buddha Field, for this indicates the greatness of Akṣobhya, tempts devotees, and serves as a basis for visualization and recollection of the Buddha Akṣobhya. In that land there is an enormous tree under which the Buddha sits on a raised platform:

> Around the bodhi-tree are rows of palm trees and jasmine trees, which in the gentle breeze, [gives] forth a harmonious and elegant sound surpassing all worldly music. Furthermore . . . that Buddha-land does not have the three miserable planes of existence. . . . All the sentient beings in that Buddha-land have accomplished the ten good deeds. The ground is as flat as a palm and the colour of gold, with no gullies, brambles, or gravel; it is as soft as cotton, sinking as soon as one's foot steps on it and returning to its original state as soon as the foot is lifted.
>
> (Chang 1983: 322; cf. Dantinne 1983: 189–90)

In Abhirati there are no illnesses, no lying, no ugliness or smelly things. There are no jails. No non-Buddhists. Trees are laden with flowers and fruit, and there are also trees which produce fragrant and beautiful garments. Food and drink appear as wished: 'There are . . . many gardens and pavilions, all pure and clean. The sentient beings there all live with joy in the Dharma' (Chang 1983: 322). There is no jealousy, women there are wonderfully beautiful, and they are freed from the curse of menstruation (*ibid*.: 323, 319; Dantinne 1983: 97, 194 ff.):

> Furthermore, in that land, mother and child are safe and unsullied from conception to birth. How can this be? All this is due to the power of Tathāgata Akṣobhya's original vows. . . . [I]n that Buddha-land there is such peace and bliss. . . . [T]here is neither trade nor trader, neither farms nor farming; there is happiness at all times. . . . [I]n that Buddha-land, singing and playing do not involve sexual desire. The sentient-beings there derive their joy exclusively from the Dharma.
>
> (Chang 1983: 325; cf. Dantinne 1983: 201–2)

According to the Tibetan version, in Abhirati there is no physical sexuality. As soon as a man approaches a woman with carnal thought and sees her, the carnal thought ceases and he enters a meditative absorption on detachment from impurity. She, on the other hand, by virtue of the mere glance becomes pregnant. The pregnancy is apparently no problem (Dantinne 1983: 196).[87] Clearly, Abhirati is a wonderful world of happiness, free of all danger, a world which is the exact opposite of our dirty polluted world, where people toil with little reward but poverty and starvation, followed by a mean death. All these splendid things are the results, we are repeatedly told, of Akṣobhya's great vows and compassion. There are sun and moon in Abhirati, but they have no function, for they are completely eclipsed by the light of Akṣobhya (Chang 1983: 324).

One cannot be reborn in the Pure Land by greedily desiring it, for 'one with any passion or attachment cannot be reborn in that Buddha-land. Only those who have planted good roots and cultivated pure conduct can be born there' (*ibid*.: 323; Dantinne 1983: 199). In fact, the principal purpose of being reborn in Abhirati is to follow the Buddhist path in the presence of Akṣobhya, under optimum facilities for spiritual growth. Not all in the Pure Land follow the Mahāyāna, however, for there are also Hearers and Arhats present. Still, with these facilities becoming an Arhat can be obtained very quickly. In Abhirati, '[t]hey are said to be indolent because they fail to end all their defilements at one sitting'.[88]

How is the aspirant then to be reborn in this wonderful land? It is made clear that in general such a rebirth is quite difficult.[89] It is through strenuous moral and spiritual cultivation. Broadly, first, if the aspirant is able to do so then they should follow the Bodhisattva path, and vow to be reborn in that land of Abhirati. Second, all merit obtained through good works should be dedicated to the future rebirth there. Nevertheless, one should not be selfish. The motive power for this rebirth is in order to attain enlightenment and then 'illuminate the whole world' (Chang 1983: 332). The practitioner should learn meditation and frequent holy people. Significantly it is also important to visualize the Buddhas in their

Buddha Fields expounding the Doctrine, and vow to be like them. By such means one can be reborn in the Pure Land of Buddha Akṣobhya in the future, and even now, immediately, fall under his divine protection (*ibid.*: 332–5).[90]

One noteworthy feature of Akṣobhya and his Pure Land is that this Buddha will eventually enter final nirvāṇa, having arranged for his successor, in the same way that Śākyamuni arranged for Maitreya. Akṣobhya's final act will be self-cremation, apparently through internal combustion generated by the force of meditation.[91] The Doctrine preached by Akṣobhya will endure for many aeons after his passing, but will eventually decline. All this will happen because of the declining merit of people in Abhirati: 'It is because people of that time will lack interest in learning the Dharma that those who can expound the Dharma will go away from them' (Chang 1983: 332). People will hear little of the teaching, and will cease to practise. The learned monks will therefore withdraw into seclusion, and eventually the Dharma will be no more.

It is clear throughout this discussion that the land of Abhirati and the Tathāgata Akṣobhya are modelled on Śākyamuni and this world – but raised in all respects to a higher plane of loveliness and spirituality. It is our world *as it ought to be*, the world of dreams.[92] This very fact suggests the antiquity of interest in the Buddha Akṣobhya, although we have no idea now what concrete form any cult may have taken. Akṣobhya was clearly important in certain circles during the early centuries CE, although any cult seems not to have survived, or to have been transmitted in any identifiable form as a separate cult to other Buddhist countries. This may be because it was eclipsed early on by other forms of Buddhism in India, and the development of a Sukhāvatī cult of Amitāyus in Central and East Asia. Nevertheless, Akṣobhya does become an important Buddha in a rather different context, the tantric traditions of late Indian Buddhism (ninth to twelfth centuries). Through these traditions he is also important in Nepalese and Tibetan Buddhism. As a tantric Buddha, Akṣobhya is often the principal Buddha of the *maṇḍala*, the cosmogram which is so important in tantric ritual and meditation. In such a context he is coloured blue, and associated with four other Buddhas: Vairocana, Ratnasambhava, Amitābha, and Amoghasiddhi.[93]

Bhaiṣajyaguru

Bhaiṣajyaguru is the Medicine Buddha. We have seen that other Buddhas and Bodhisattvas include among their functions the preventing and curing of illness, but Bhaiṣajyaguru represents an incarnation of the dimension of healing in all its aspects – from the curing of a cold through that of mental disease to enlightenment itself, a healing of the human condition. In Tibet, Bhaiṣajyaguru serves as the patron saint of medicine, most of which is carried out by monk-physicians. Meditative generation of Bhaiṣajyaguru, together with the recitation of his mantra, can be used to empower and enrich the medicines themselves.[94]

There are two sūtras particularly devoted to the topic of Bhaiṣajyaguru – the *Bhaiṣajyaguru Sūtra*, and a sūtra which is best known by the short title of *Saptabuddha* (or

Saptatathāgata) *Sūtra*. The latter text incorporates much of the *Bhaiṣajyaguru Sūtra*, but adds a further six Buddhas to Bhaiṣajyaguru, giving a set of seven. Both sūtras are available in Tibetan, and the Sanskrit *Bhaiṣajyaguru Sūtra* was discovered at Gilgit. In spite of this we should not assume that the presence of a Sanskrit and a Tibetan version means that the sūtra was necessarily composed in India. Raoul Birnbaum (1980) has noted that there are no images of Bhaiṣajyaguru in India predating the transmission of the *Bhaiṣajyaguru Sūtra* to China, and none of the Chinese pilgrims to India mentions a cult of Bhaiṣajyaguru. The oldest Chinese translation of the sūtra (early fourth century) is contained in a composite sūtra the authencity of which has been doubted from early times.[95] By the fourth century, on the other hand, Bhaiṣajyaguru had already become an important figure in other sūtras translated into Chinese, and appears to have been significant in Central Asia. It has been argued (Birnbaum 1980: 52ff.; cf. Soper 1959: 176–8) that the *Bhaiṣajyaguru Sūtra* was composed in Central Asia, and then introduced into India, where it became sufficiently known to be quote extensively by Śāntideva in the 7th or the 8th century, although the point remains controversial. The most popular version in East Asia is that translated by Xuanzang in the seventh century, and this corresponds closely with the Sanskrit and Tibetan versions.[96]

The *Bhaiṣajyaguru Sūtra* is much like other sūtras of its type. It describes the great vows of Bhaiṣajyaguru as a Bodhisattva, devotes a brief note to his Buddha Field, which, suffice to say, is just wonderful, and describes at length, with details for ritual, the benefits which flow from worshipping Bhaiṣajyaguru and in particular invoking his name. In setting out on the Bodhisattva path, Bhaiṣajyaguru is said to have made 12 great vows, namely that when he becomes a Buddha, according to Birnbaum's version from the Chinese: (i) he will have an extensive radiance, the 112 marks of a superior being, and will cause all sentient beings to resemble him; (ii) his body will be like flawless beryl, surpassing the sun and moon in radiance; (iii) he will enable all beings to have whatever is needed; (iv) he will cause non-Buddhists to enter the path of enlightenment, and those who follow the lower Vehicles to adopt the Mahāyāna; (v) he will enable his followers to have perfect morality and aspirations, and through the salvific power of his name he will purify those who transgress and prevent them from falling into the lower realms; (vi) he will cure those with deformities, 'leprous, convulsive, insane', again through the power of his name; (vii)

> [W]hen I attain enlightenment . . . if there are any sentient beings who are ill and oppressed, who have nowhere to go and nothing to return to, who have neither doctor nor medicine, neither relatives nor immediate family, who are destitute and whose sufferings are acute – as soon as my name passes through their ears, they will be cured of all their diseases and they will be peaceful and joyous in body and mind. They will have plentiful families and property, and they will personally experience the supreme enlightenment.
>
> (Birnbaum 1980: 153–4)

(viii) women who are weary of their female state (in primitive conditions a state of constant pregnancy with poor medical facilities) can be reborn as males through his name (the

Saptabuddha Sūtra states this can occur in the *present* life); (ix) all will escape the net of Māra, abandon false views and progress on the Bodhisattva path; (x) all who are confronted by fears and pains, particularly due to royal punishment, may be relieved through hearing his name; (xi) those who transgress through hunger or thirst will attain excellent food and drink, then afterwards the Doctrine, once more through the name of Bhaiṣajyaguru; and finally, (xii) those who are too poor to afford clothes, and are tormented by cold, heat, flies and mosquitoes, will obtain through the power of recollecting the Buddha's name not just clothing but ornaments, garlands, incense, music and entertainment (Birnbaum 1980: 152–5). How can all this happen simply through hearing the name of Bhaiṣajyaguru? The *Saptabuddha Sūtra* implies that it is due to the great vows of these Buddhas, and their consequential immense power.

The Buddha Field of Bhaiṣajyaguru is, like that of Akṣobhya, in the east. Its description is very brief, for it is said to be just like Sukhāvatī, with the ground of beryl and roads marked with gold. There are no women in that land, for women are reborn there in the superior state of men. In his own Pure Land Bhaiṣajyaguru is accompanied by two Bodhisattvas, as is Amitābha, known as Sūryaprabha and Candraprabha. These Bodhisattvas lead the dead into the presence of Bhaiṣajyaguru. There appear to be no non-Mahāyāna practitioners in this Pure Land.

The benefits of worshipping Bhaiṣajyaguru, or the sūtra, are strikingly 'this-worldly'. First, Bhaiṣajyaguru saves those who would otherwise go straight to the lower realms, even the most vicious. He can also save those who have already reached the lower realms but who, as with a distant echo, remember for some reason his name. Through his power they then attain favourable rebirths, including, under certain conditions, rebirth in Sukhāvatī itself – although strangely no mention is made in this context of his own Pure Land.[97] The best method of worshipping Bhaiṣajyaguru is to set up an image of the Buddha on a throne, scatter flowers, burn incense, and adorn the area with banners and pennants:

> For seven days and seven nights they should accept and hold to the eight-fold vows, eat pure food, bathe in fragrant and pure water, and wear new and clean clothing. They should give birth to the unstained, single-minded state, with no thought of anger or harm. Towards all sentient beings there should arise the thoughts of blessings and benefits, peace, loving kindness, sympathetic joy, and equanimity. They should play musical instruments and sing praises while circumambulating to the right of the Buddha image. Furthermore, they should recall the merits of that Tathāgata's fundamental vows and study and recite this sūtra. They should think only of its principles and lecture on the sūtra, elucidating its main points.[98]

According to the sūtra, through practices like these one can attain longevity, wealth, an official position, sons, daughters, freedom from nightmares or whatever is required (Birnbaum 1980: 162). Concentration on the name of the Buddha and worshipping him is of value at the time of death, and also for women in childbirth. It can bring back beings who have been

presumed dead, and who have already travelled beyond this world to the court of Yama, the King and Judge of the Dead.[99] Such a person will have witnessed the fruits of good and bad deeds 'like a dream', and will become a reformed person for ever more (*ibid.*: 165). Naturally the sick too can be saved by worshipping Bhaiṣajyaguru (details are given for a special ritual). A king can overcome epidemics, invasions, rebellion, meteorological, astronomical and astrological calamities. The state can be made tranquil. The *Saptabuddha Sūtra* adds a *mantra* or *dhāraṇī* which can be used at times of illness, for longevity and so on. It can also be recited over medicine to increase its efficacy. According to Tibetan sources it is beneficial to recite this *mantra* and also the name of Bhaiṣajyaguru in the ear of a dying person, and even to recite the *mantra* and then blow upon meat or old bones, for this can lead to a lessening of the sufferings of the dead creature, and possibly a favourable rebirth. To those who uphold the worship of Bhaiṣajyaguru and his sūtra 12 *yakṣa* generals (a sort of demigod) and their armies will offer protection. Longevity, health, prosperity, protection of the state – these were the messages that Chinese and Japanese emperors wanted to hear, this was what they wanted from a worthwhile religion.

In Japan in particular the worship of Bhaiṣajyaguru (Japanese: Yakushi) has been especially important. We have seen already that recitation of sūtras to ward off pestilence and disasters and to protect the state was an integral part of Japanese Buddhism from the beginning. In 720 the empress commanded that the *Bhaiṣajyaguru Sūtra* be read in 48 temples for one day and one night in order to save the life of her minister. He died the very next day.[100] Nevertheless, a general amnesty was declared, one of the meritorious deeds recommended by the sūtra. In the ninth century Bhaiṣajyaguru rites were performed to counter droughts and pestilence. Ceremonies centred on the seven Buddhas were used to repel Mongol invasions in the thirteenth century, and the worship of Bhaiṣajyaguru was often performed when the emperor or one of his family was ill.

In Buddhist iconography Bhaiṣajyaguru is usually represented seated as a Buddha in full lotus posture. He is blue, a colour of beryl, or gold with a halo of blue rays. In his left hand on his lap he holds a bowl containing medicine, although sometimes in Japanese versions Bhaiṣajyaguru holds a small medicine bowl in the palm of his left hand, which rests on his left knee. In Tibetan art the Buddha's right hand is characteristically open and resting on his right knee with the palm facing outwards. He holds the stem of a medicinal myrobalan plant.[101] In artistic representation Bhaiṣajyaguru may be flanked by his two Bodhisattvas, Sūryaprabha and Candraprabha, and perhaps also the 12 *yakṣa* generals. Some of these features can be seen in a large and complex painting on silk from Dunhuang (ninth century) in the British Museum, which also contains side-scenes of the forms of untimely death from which, according to the sūtra, one can be protected by Bhaiṣajyaguru – illness aggravated by lack of proper treatment or through recourse to spirit-mediums, execution, death due to over-indulgence, burning, drowning, wild beasts, falling off a mountain, poisonous herbs, spells or magic, and finally starvation or dehydration. On the other side are depicted the 12 vows of Bhaiṣajyaguru (Zwalf 1985: 217). The Pure Land itself is modelled closely on Amitāyus' Sukhāvatī, as one might expect.

Amitābha /Amitāyus

The Amitābha sūtras

The most widespread of the cults devoted to Buddhas is that of Amitābha or Amitāyus.[102] In contemporary Japanese Buddhism it accounts for more practitioners than any other Buddhist tradition. For centuries the sūtras that focus on Amitābha and their exegesis by Chinese and Japanese devotees have formed the vision and the hope of millions of East Asian Buddhists, and their influence on East Asian culture has been correspondingly immense.

In the emergence of a Pure Land tradition in India based on Amitābha or Amitāyus, Kenneth K. Tanaka (1990: 3–13) has detected five chronological stages. First, there was the idea that grew up (he argues) soon after the death of Śākyamuni Buddha that there were previous Buddhas. From this it was inferred that there will also be Buddhas in the future as well, and by the end of the second century BCE this hope had focused on the figure of Maitreya. The second stage, also in the second century BCE, was the development in some circles of the idea of innumerable world realms in each of the 10 directions. Early Buddhism held to the idea that there cannot be more than one Buddha existing at the same time. With the rise of the idea of the Bodhisattva and his career to perfect Buddhahood, and the suggestion that there could be a multiplicity of those pursuing the supreme path of a Bodhisattva, where could these Bodhisattvas become Buddhas? It was posited that at least some of the other-world realms may be inhabited by a Buddha. This gave rise to the concept of Buddha Fields, with the likelihood of Buddhas existing contemporaneously albeit in different Buddha Fields. Hence it became realistic to think of a Bodhisattva becoming a Buddha *somewhere else* even now. Such ways of thinking were criticized by some, such as the Theravādins and Sarvāstivādins, but accepted by, e.g., the Mahāsāṃghika and Lokottaravāda traditions.[103] Tanaka argues that this led eventually to the idea that while there may be no Buddha in this world now, able to help us, elsewhere there are now compassionate Buddhas and indeed their attendant Bodhisattvas able and willing to help and with great stocks of merit that they can transfer for the welfare of their devotees. Tanaka suggests that the evolution of this idea may have occurred in Buddhism in an environment of competition with the emergence of Brāhmanic devotional cults centred on the gods Śiva and Viṣṇu. The third stage of the evolution of an Indian Pure Land tradition lay in the emergence by the latter half of the first century CE of the Buddha Amitābha or Amitāyus as one of these contemporary Buddhas, residing in his Buddha Land of Sukhāvatī. The associated sūtras focusing on this Buddha were compiled round about 100 CE. Fourth, by the early fourth or perhaps even the third century CE enthusiasts for this Buddha had adopted *buddhānusmṛti* practices of visualization and recitation of his name. As we have seen, *buddhānusmṛti* visualization practices were by that time well-established and led to the production particularly in certain areas of north-west Indian and Central Asian Buddhism of a whole series of 'visualization sūtras' enthusiastically translated into Chinese during the early fifth century, often by Central Asian translators. The final stage in the evolution of the Pure Land tradition may have been critical commentarial development. Tanaka's model

looks broadly convincing, although the exact chronology may be questioned.[104] He notes, however, that although many Sanskrit texts refer to Amitābha/Amitāyus or Sukhāvatī very little by way of Pure Land commentarial writing has been discovered in Indian Buddhism: '[D]espite numerous passing references, a Pure Land commentarial tradition in India was virtually nonexistent' (Tanaka 1990: 13). This, it seems to me, is important.

The Indic textual basis for the Japanese Amitābha cult, often known simply as 'Pure Land Buddhism', lies in three sūtras – the Larger and Smaller *Sukhāvatīvyūha Sūtras*, and a sūtra of particularly obscure origin which has been given the Sanskrit title **Amitāyurdhyāna Sūtra* (Chinese: *Guanwuliangshoufojing*; *Kuan-wu-liang-shou-fo Ching*), but if it warrants a Sanskrit title at all should probably more accurately (and significantly) be referred to as the **Amitāyurbuddhānusmṛti Sūtra*. We should not assume, however, that this much later linking of these three sūtras corresponds to a link in India itself. The latter sūtra may well have never existed in India, and the exact connection between the other two is very unclear. In India they may not have been directly associated, and as we have seen there were other Mahāyāna sūtras (such as the *Pratyutpanna Sūtra*) that gave a role to Amitāyus and many more that gave one to Sukhāvatī. The association of these three sūtras in particular as the Indian textual basis for some sort of Pure Land school reached its definitive form late in the day in Japan, where they were classed together by Hōnen (1133–1212), on the basis of their use by earlier Chinese masters like Tanluan (see below). In actual fact we have very little evidence (from accounts of Chinese pilgrims, for example) that there ever was much by way of a Pure Land *school* as such, in Indian Buddhism and what sort of Amitābha *cult* there may have been if there was one we simply do not know.[105] The evidence from, e.g., archaeology and epigraphy is scarce, certainly for most of the earlier period. We do not know with any assurance how important these texts were in Indian Buddhism, or even in the development of Mahāyāna Buddhism in India. They have little by way of specific surviving Indian commentaries, which suggests that they were not that significant in Indian Buddhist scholarship, although significance for scholars is not the only sort of significance. Either way, we should be cautious about projecting much later East Asian models and understandings of Buddhism back onto the Indian situation.[106]

The Larger *Sukhāvatīvyūha Sūtra* is said to have been translated first into Chinese during the second century CE, although the version most frequently used today by the Pure Land traditions is that traditionally attributed to Saṅghavarman and held to have been translated in 252. This attribution now looks unlikely. Either way, however, there seems little doubt that the Larger *Sukhāvatīvyūha Sūtra* is an old sūtra, dating in origins from before the end of the second century. Japanese scholars suggest that it may have originated among monks perhaps of the Mahīśāsaka sect in Gandhāra during the Kuṣāṇa period, possibly influenced by the Lokottaravāda tradition, and like the stylistically similar *Akṣobhyavyūha* it was perhaps originally in the Gāndhārī language or a language very similar to it.[107] The Smaller *Sukhāvatīvyūha Sūtra* was first translated into Chinese by Kumārajīva in about 402 CE, and this version has become the accepted text of the Smaller *Sukhāvatīvyūha* among East Asian Buddhists. Western scholars generally accept the Larger *Sukhāvatīvyūha* as the older

of the two sūtras, although in Japan it is often held that the Smaller *Sukhāvatīvyūha* is the older of the two sūtras, and it has even been suggested that the original form of this sūtra may be as old as the first century BCE. This would identify some form of Pure Land teaching with one of the earliest recognizable streams of Mahāyāna Buddhism.[108] Such, it seems to me, is quite possible. We have seen the development of the importance of *buddhānusmṛti*, and we have also seen that early Mahāyāna was characterized by a number of practices and traditions which may well have been rival and mutually incompatible. That some of these were centred on particular Buddhas is an obvious inference, and therefore Buddha traditions like that of Amitābha were perhaps part of the very fabric of Mahāyāna Buddhism from its inception. Both the *Sukhāvatīvyūha Sūtras* also survive in Tibetan and Sanskrit, although there are a number of interesting differences between the versions, particularly in the number of vows listed in the different texts of the Larger *Sukhāvatīvyūha Sūtra*. Indeed it is not impossible that some passages were interpolated into this sūtra in China.

The *Sukhāvatīvyūha Sūtras* speak of the Buddha Amitābha or Amitāyus (Japanese: Amida). Generally, and for the Pure Land traditions, these are two names of the same Buddha, although in Tibet the two are treated separately. According to the Larger *Sukhāvatīvyūha*, he is called 'Amitābha' – Immeasurable Light – because his light is immeasurable, illuminating myriads of Buddha Fields in every direction with its radiance; Later Pure Land exegetes state that this Immeasurable Light of Amitābha is in fact a reference to his infinite wisdom, his all-illuminating and infinite omniscience. He is called 'Amitāyus' – Immeasurable Life – because his life is immeasurable, lasting for innumerable aeons. He remains for the benefit of sentient beings, constantly helping them in many different ways. Thus, corresponding to his infinite light as wisdom, Pure Land scholars refer to Amitābha's infinite life as an expression of his boundless compassion (Eracle 1973: 33–4).

The Larger *Sukhāvatīvyūha Sūtra* tells of the Bodhisattva Dharmākara who, in the presence of a previous Buddha, conceived and set his mind on a most marvellous Buddha Field, embodying all the virtues of myriads of other Buddha Fields, and exceeding them all. He then made a series of vows, as Bodhisattvas are wont to do in such circumstances.[109] The number of these vows differs from version to version, with 47 in the Sanskrit, and 48 in the 'Saṅghavarman' translation, which forms the basis of the Pure Land practices and traditions. Common to all of these vows, however, is the condition 'if this vow is not fulfilled, then may I not become a Fully Enlightened Buddha'. Since the Bodhisattva Dharmākara is now none other than the Buddha Amitābha, reigning in his Pure Land of Sukhāvatī in the west, we know that these conditions must indeed have been fulfilled. Thus Dharmākara vows that all who are born in his land will never return to the lower realms.[110] They will all remember their past lives, and have other miraculous abilities (vows 5 ff.). They will be firmly established in a state set on enlightenment.[111] Those in his land will have, if they wish, an unlimited lifespan (vow 15). Innumerable Buddhas will glorify the name of Amitābha and praise him (vow 17). Those who sincerely trust in Amitābha and desire to be reborn in his Pure Land need 'call on the name' of Amitābha only 10 times and they will be reborn

there – provided they have not committed any of the five great crimes of murdering father or mother, or an Arhat, harming a Buddha, or causing schism in the *saṃgha*, or have slandered the Dharma.[112] At the time of death Amitābha will appear, together with a 'multitude of sages', before his followers, who have awakened *bodhicitta* and practised merit, wishing to be reborn in the Pure Land (vow 19).[113] All those who hear the name of Amitābha and sincerely wish to be reborn in the Pure Land, directing their merits towards such a birth, will indeed be reborn there (vow 20). Moreover, if Bodhisattvas from elsewhere reach Sukhāvatī, they will thus enter the state of 'one more birth', which is to say that they will require only one more birth before attaining Buddhahood.[114] This is always supposing, the sūtra adds, that such is what they want. If they are among those rare and exceptional ones who desire, out of compassion, to be continually reborn in order in that way to help other sentient beings, then they can continue to do so.[115] And of course from Sukhāvatī beings will very rapidly and easily be able to visit other Buddha Lands to make grand offerings to innumerable Buddhas (vows 23–4).

All has come about as Dharmākara wished. There is indeed a most wonderful Pure Land, and both versions of the *Sukhāvatīvyūha Sūtra* give extensive details of the appearance of Sukhāvatī, doubtless as a prescriptive basis for the visualization of the Buddha Amitābha within his Pure Land.[116] If someone wishes in order to attain enlightenment to be reborn in that Pure Land, he or she should produce *bodhicitta*, hear the name of Amitābha, meditate on him and think of him, pray to be reborn in Sukhāvatī and attain merit as a basis for such a birth. Even those who are not very keen on Amitābha will be led to Sukhāvatī at death – not by Amitābha personally but by a magically-produced Buddha. Within such a framework rebirth in Sukhāvatī and eventual enlightenment is not difficult. It is much easier than trying to attain enlightenment under adverse conditions in this decadent world.[117] At death generally Amitābha will himself conduct someone to his Pure Land, and this descent of Amitābha is the subject of innumerable Japanese paintings. In one example Amitābha, together with his heavenly host, drums and music, is seen descending rapidly across the mountain tops. Trees burst into spring blossom at his approach. He crosses the canvas diagonally towards the monk who awaits the coming of the Lord, peacefully invoking Amitābha's holy name from his hermitage.[118] In the Pure Land a being is reborn nonsexually. The blessed appear, seated on lotus blossoms, in the presence of Amitābha. A Central Asian wall painting from eighth-century Qočo depicts the reborn as swarms of naked children seated on lotuses or playing in the beautiful garden of Sukhāvatī. One lotus is still closed, however, in a tight bud with the naked child still within (Gaulier *et al.* 1976: plate 49). According to the Larger *Sukhāvatīvyūha Sūtra* those who still harbour some doubt concerning Amitābha and his Pure Land are reborn within closed lotuses, where they dwell comfortably for 500 years, seeing the inside of the lotus as a palace with gardens. Nevertheless, being apart from the Buddha and his doctrine, relatively this is not a terribly good or happy rebirth. Eventually overcoming these doubts, such beings are grateful to emerge from this purifying purgatory, wherein they have been deprived of the celestial vision.

The principal concern of the Smaller *Sukhāvatīvyūha Sūtra* is to describe the Pure Land of Sukhāvatī (a description which does not tally completely with that of the larger sūtra) and give further elucidation of the means to attain such a favourable rebirth. In that Pure Land all is contingent upon the need for spiritual growth. It is clearly not intended merely as a sensual paradise, a place of unrestricted pleasure, alongside the various heavenly realms accepted as occupied by the gods and generally viewed with a certain disdain in the Buddhist traditions. The birds of Sukhāvatī, the result of Amitābha's great power, all proclaim the Dharma, as do the trees when gently stirred in the soft breeze. The particular instrument of rebirth in Sukhāvatī is said by this sūtra to be holding in mind the name of Amitāyus with undistracted thought for a day, or up to seven days, in other words a form of *buddhānusmṛti*. Thereupon Amitāyus will appear at the time of death, and the practitioner will attain to Sukhāvatī. One is reminded here of the *Pratyutpanna Sūtra*, although the recollection of the Buddha in the *Sukhāvatī Sūtra* is much less elaborate, and the *pratyutpanna samādhi* is said to lead in this very life to a vision of Amitāyus. It is possible that there was yet another controversy in India or Central Asia in classical times between advocates of a vision of Amitābha in this life, and those who sought the vision at the time of death.[119]

The **Amitāyurbuddhānusmṛti Sūtra* (if it is correct to give it a Sanskrit title) is a rather different type of sūtra. It was supposedly translated into Chinese by Kālayaśas in the earlier part of the fifth century. It is one of a series of sūtras concerned with the visualization of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas which were translated into Chinese at about the same time, and were probably composed during the preceding century (Pas 1977: 200 ff.). Scholars are now inclined to see the **Amitāyurbuddhānusmṛti Sūtra* as a text from either Central Asia or from China itself. On the other hand Julian Pas has pointed out that almost all the translators of these visualization sūtras have some connection with the area around Kashmir, and it is possible that the sūtras themselves were composed in that area, or nearby regions of Central Asia. His own view is that the **Amitāyurbuddhānusmṛti Sūtra* as it stands contains a series of interpolations, some quite lengthy and some of which are undoubtedly Chinese. Among these interpolations are sections important to subsequent Pure Land thought in East Asia.[120]

As a text the **Amitāyurbuddhānusmṛti Sūtra* concentrates less on rebirth in the Pure Land than on *buddhānusmṛti* practices for seeing Amitābha in this present life. It purports to be a teaching given by Śākyamuni Buddha to queen Vaidehī who had been imprisoned by her vicious son Ajātaśatru. The dramatic situation arises out of the sufferings of queen Vaidehī (Inagaki 1995: 95):

> [R]eveal to me a land of no sorrow and no affliction where I can be reborn. I do not wish to live in this defiled and evil world . . . where there are hells, realms of hungry spirits, animals and many vile beings. I wish that in the future I shall not hear evil words or see wicked people.

The Buddha, full of compassion, explained that Amitābha is not very far away, and taught her a series of 13 visualization meditations: (i) on the setting sun in the west; (ii) on pure clear water, then visualized as ice, then as beryl, and then gradually visualized as the Pure

Land itself; (iii) this visualization of the ground is fixed in the mind unwaveringly; and then are added (iv) the trees; (v) the ponds; (vi) the jewelled pavilions containing gods playing heavenly music that teaches the Dharma; (vii) the lotus throne of Amitāyus; (viii) with Amitāyus upon it, and to the left of the Buddha is Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara, while to the right is Bodhisattva Mahāsthāmaprāpta; (xi) then one contemplates the form of Amitāyus; (x) then the form of Avalokiteśvara; (xi) and then the form of Mahāsthāmaprāpta; (xii) one prays for rebirth in Sukhāvatī, and visualizes completely, in detail with a fixed mind, oneself born on a lotus in the Pure Land; and finally (xiii) one visualizes Amitāyus and the two Bodhisattvas there in front.

These 13 meditations clearly require some time and ability. They are also placed by the sūtra on a firm moral foundation. The text now continues with a further three meditations, each of which refers to three types of birth in the Pure Land, graded according to superiority. There are thus nine grades of rebirth in Sukhāvatī.[121] Even the lowest person can attain rebirth in Amitābha's Pure Land. Even the most immoral people who have committed the five worst deeds may just before death meet a good teacher, who will tell of the Buddha and his Dharma. Even if the miscreant cannot think of Amitāyus he (or she) may call on his name 10 times. This will eradicate immense misdeeds, and he will be reborn inside a lotus bud in Sukhāvatī, staying there for 12 aeons. The lotus will then open. Our reformed miscreant will behold Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta who will preach to them the Doctrine. He will consequently develop *bodhicitta*. Only hearing the names of Amitāyus and his two Bodhisattvas eradicates many misdeeds, let alone remembering and reciting their names (Inagaki 1995: 116–17).

On this sūtra in particular, which teaches help for even the most vicious sinners who are incapable of the complex visualization practices even if they wished to do them, rest the hopes of the Pure Land tradition.[122] If the hopes of those who feel themselves to be helpless sinners, or who cannot practise the more complex teachings, rest on a Chinese interpolation, well then, the interpolation was no doubt inspired by the compassion of the Buddha who neglects no one, no matter how vicious, inferior, or obscure.

Amitābha's Pure Land in China

It is widely felt in China that the founder of the Chinese Pure Land movement was Huiyuan. In Japan, however, Huiyuan is sometimes excluded from the list of Pure Land patriarchs. This is because from the perspective of the dominant Japanese Pure Land tradition of Shinran (q.v.) Huiyuan's practice was not a mass-movement aimed at the salvation of the common people, but rather a restricted and elitist activity. In addition it was based not on the three Amitābha sūtras that the Japanese Pure Land tradition came to see as central to their faith, but on the *Pratyutpanna Sūtra*. Huiyuan sought to attain Sukhāvatī through his own power, not solely through the compassion of Amitābha and his vows to save those who called upon him. Thus, it was argued, the honour of being the first Chinese patriarch falls to Tanluan.

Whether one accepts Huiyuan as a patriarch or not, however, it is necessary in fact to go beyond the Chinese masters if one wants to trace some sort of lineage, a 'patriarchate', back to respected Indian teachers and via them through master to pupil back to the Buddha himself. For the Amitābha Pure Land movements of both China and Japan, when they came to think of Indian patriarchs, their link with the fountainhead of all Buddhist doctrine, they thought of them as Nāgārjuna and Vasubandhu. It was hoped thereby that the Pure Land teachings could be given a respectable Indian ancestry.

The basis for considering Nāgārjuna a patriarch of the Pure Land practices and traditions lies primarily in a particular section of a work attributed to Nāgārjuna and known in Sanskrit reconstruction as the **Daśabhūmikavibhāṣā Śāstra* (Chinese: *Shizhu piposha Lun*; *Shih-chu p'i-p'o-sha Lun*). This is a commentary on the *Daśabhūmika Sūtra*.[123] In this treatise 'Nāgārjuna', in the context of discussing the activity of the Bodhisattva, distinguishes between an easy and a difficult way of practising the Mahāyāna path of the Bodhisattva:

> In the Buddha's teaching there are countless gates. Just as there are difficult and easy among the paths of this world – for journeying overland is full of hardship while sailing on board a boat is pleasant – so it is with the paths of bodhisattvas. Some engage in rigorous practice and endeavor; others quickly reach the stage of nonretrogression through the easy practice of entrusting as the means [for attaining it]. . . .
>
> If a person desires quickly to attain
> The stage of nonretrogression,
> He or she should, with a reverent heart,
> Say the name, holding steadfast to it.[124]

Our author mentions all the Buddhas of the 10 directions, but he particularly singles out Amitābha (Amida) for praise, and tells us that he personally thinks of Amitābha constantly (Shinran 1997, Vol. 1: 23).

What 'Nāgārjuna' refers to here corresponds to the distinction between a quick path to enlightenment and the heroic long path undertaken by very rare beings that is found or implied in the Larger *Sukhāvatīvyūha Sūtra*. What is said in this source, therefore, whether or not it is by Nāgārjuna, is reasonably in keeping with the Indian sūtra itself. Nevertheless, the claim that relying on Amitābha and his Pure Land is an easier path needs to be very carefully contextualized. That it is an 'easy path' was clearly thought to be one of its attractions, but this view was apparently criticized within India by Yogācāra writers like Asaṅga.[125] In his *Mahāyānasaṃgraha* Asaṅga argues that it is necessary to understand the intention of the Buddha when he spoke of someone certainly attaining the goal simply through reciting the name of a Buddha, or someone being born in Sukhāvatī through simply a vow or an aspiration that it should be the case. Asaṅga's text is compressed and obscure, but if we can follow the commentaries then his point is that the Buddha's special intention (*abhiprāya*) in saying such things was to encourage the indolent – the 'others', no doubt lazy, worldly monks but also perhaps the simple, the masses and the ordinary laity – who were incapable of practising

the Dharma properly with enthusiasm. It was not to be taken literally. It is not really true that one can actually attain certainty of enlightenment, even Buddhahood, simply through such easy means as reciting the name of a Buddha.[126]

This critical approach to the Pure Land movement was often adopted in China by those sympathetic to Yogācāra who would oppose Pure Land forms of Buddhism. However, it is clear that in reality Pure Land practice in much of East Asian Buddhism has by no means been 'easy' in any absolute sense. As Charles B. Jones has shown from his own experience of a Pure Land retreat in contemporary Taiwan, serious and intensive Pure Land practice, with its early rising, austere diet and constant round of chanting and meditation, is relatively difficult by worldly standards and always would have been.[127] When the Pure Land tradition thinks of itself as easy it should be understood to be comparing itself with the long and astonishingly – indeed superhumanly – 'excruciating' (Nattier 2003a) path of the Bodhisattva as described in the classic sūtras and exegetical explanations of the Bodhisattva way. As we have seen, these draw on jātaka-type tales of Śākyamuni Buddha's extraordinary acts on his own path to Buddhahood – giving away his flesh and limbs to a sadistic king while making no complaint, offering himself to a starving tigress, or his wife and children to someone who asked for them in order to carry out a grisly sacrifice, for example – in order to construct a model for the would-be Bodhisattva to aspire to in future lives over three incalculable aeons. But it seems certain that these jātaka tales were originally descriptive, intended to inspire awe and wonder at the greatness of Śākyamuni Buddha and the all but impossibly difficult path he had followed over such an unimaginably long time. They are precisely incapable of imitation by real-life individuals. That was indeed the point. But with the rise of the Bodhisattva ideal as an exceptional but all the same a genuine option, however, these ideal stories – if you like, myths – were presented as real aspirations. They remained nevertheless all but impossible. That did not matter, however, since (with the exception of certain enthusiasts like the Chinese monks who burned themselves alive or offered themselves to tigers) they were projected far into the future when the Bodhisattva had become sufficiently spiritually mature to take them on.

In other words, the classical world of the Bodhisattva path and his or her acts was in fact impossibly difficult. Of course, it was not expressed that way. It was accepted that these acts could not be *impossibly* difficult since they had been done by great Bodhisattvas like Siddhārtha in the past, or Maitreya and the other great Bodhisattvas currently. But often they were felt to be impossible *for us*. The result was to make some consider the Bodhisattva aspiration and serious engagement in the path with a view to its actual completion in this life unrealistic. In cultural contexts where, for various reasons, the Bodhisattva aspiration became more and more of a religious attraction, more and more of a genuine option, its apalling difficulty became a serious drawback. This drawback was expressed in Buddhist terms through the device of the 'Final Days'. It may have been possible genuinely to follow the Bodhisattva path in the old days when the Dharma was new. But nowadays, during the Final Days, it seems to be (all but) impossible. Yet that cannot be, otherwise the Buddha would not have taught and urged for us the Bodhisattva path to full

Buddhahood. What then can be the proper way to follow the path of the Bodhisattva during the Final Days? Śākyamuni Buddha has shown that it is through the help of Amitābha and his Pure Land. Thus where we in the modern secular context might speak of the jātaka-type Bodhisattva stories as exhortative idealized myths, some in the Mahāyāna tradition spoke of different ages of the Dharma. But here the effect, and perhaps the meaning, was the same.

It is in this context that one must understand the *relative* easiness of Pure Land forms of Buddhism. In general they are only easy when compared with a path which is (arguably) astonishingly, superhumanly, unrealistic.[128] It makes the Bodhisattva path and its relatively quick completion realistic. As Jan Nattier (2003b: 194) has pointed out, it is only in the context of such a realistic approach to following the path that notions like the One Vehicle – all sentient beings are really on the single Mahāyāna Bodhisattva path – could also begin to make sense and prove attractive. Notwithstanding the Buddhist teaching of not-Self it is possible in the Pure Land (at least on some interpretations) that the aspirant will preserve some sort of personal identity with their present life and even meet again their nearest and dearest. Moreover, with rebirth in a Pure Land they can anyway achieve Buddhahood effectively and, if they wish, quickly. They can thus really complete the highest Mahāyāna aspiration, that of the Bodhisattva, which as time passed they were more and more exhorted to adopt. This makes the Mahāyāna realistic and *relatively* easy. And crucially it gives a very real hope in situations that might have appeared hopeless. As Mark L. Blum observes, 'Pure Land thinkers represented an interpretive wing of the Mahāyāna that was orthodox, compelling, and pervasive throughout East Asian Buddhism' (2002: 49).[129]

The relevant work attributed to Vasubandhu is known, again in Sanskrit reconstruction from the Chinese, as the **Sukhāvatīvyūhopadeśa* (*Wuliangshoujing youpotishe yuanshengjie*; *Wu-liang-shou ching yu-p'o-t'i-she yüan-sheng-chieh*). Once more, this text may be by Vasubandhu or it may not. It is even possible that it was written in China itself, for it is not known as a work of Vasubandhu in any Indian or Tibetan source. According to the Pure Land masters, both Nāgārjuna and Vasubandhu turned to the Pure Land teachings in old age, although there is no independent evidence for this. Nevertheless, in China, where the **Sukhāvatīvyūhopadeśa* has been very significant, it served as a basis for Tanluan's development of Pure Land doctrine. Particularly important is 'Vasubandhu's' clarification of the concept of 'faith' or 'trust' in terms of the 'five contemplative gates': Bodily worshipping Amitābha, praising him through reciting his name, vowing constantly to be reborn in the Pure Land, visualizing Sukhāvatī with Amitābha and his retinue, and transferring the merit thus attained. In this way the merit contributes towards perfecting the state of great compassion in order to benefit all sentient beings (Kiyota 1978a: 278; cf. Payne 1996). Our author, whoever he was, makes it quite clear that the purpose of rebirth in the Pure Land is to attain full enlightenment, and then out of great compassion to manifest in various ways for the benefit of others and ultimately for their enlightenment.

During the third and fourth centuries in China as far as we can tell there was very little specific devotion to Amitābha, although there is an isolated reference to Zhidun (Chih-tun; 314–66) worshipping an icon of Amitābha and seeking rebirth in Sukhāvatī where, he

assures us, 'in this country there is no arrangement of royal regulations, ranks and titles. The Buddha is the ruler, and the three Vehicles are the (state) doctrine' (Zürcher 1972: 128). The first dated image of Amitābha at Longmen in northern China is 519, although we know of further images in the south from the preceding century. Even then, the study of images produced during the sixth century indicates only 9 of Amitābha compared with 50 of Śākyamuni and 35 of Maitreya (Weinstein 1987: 69). A dramatic change occurs during the seventh century, however. From 650 to 704 only 20 images of Śākyamuni and Maitreya were erected, compared with 144 of Amitābha and Avalokiteśvara.[130] These changes occur during the collective lifetimes of Tanluan, Daochuo (Tao-ch'o; 562–645), and Shandao (Shan-tao; 613–81).

There were and are many Chinese practitioners of Pure Land forms of Buddhism, sometimes as their only practice, sometimes as their main practice, and very commonly as a subsidiary practice to others like Chan meditation that they consider more important. Even among those for whom Pure Land forms of practice centred on Amitābha and Sukhāvatī are more or less their only religious activities it should not be assumed that they all practise in the same way or have the same doctrinal understanding of what they are doing. Nevertheless, in the light of the way that Pure Land Buddhism developed subsequently especially in Shinran's tradition of Jōdo Shin Shū in Japan, Tanluan, Daochuo and Shandao are commonly linked together as three Chinese patriarchs of the Pure Land tradition.

Tanluan's principal work was a commentary to the **Sukhāvatīvyūhopadeśa*. He appears to have been particularly sensitive to what he felt were slight chances of real spiritual growth in the age in which he lived. Things were different in the golden ages of the past, when there were sages like the Buddha around. Nowadays how could one make any spiritual progress? Tanluan adopted from 'Nāgārjuna' the distinction between difficult and easy paths, and used this distinction in order to create a religion of what he may have been the first to call 'Other Power'. Tanluan was convinced that nowadays it is very difficult to advance to enlightenment through relying solely on one's 'Own Power', that is, through the results of one's own practices of spiritual discipline and study. But through having recourse to the power of an Other, the supremely powerful Amitābha and his great vows, it is possible to be reborn in Sukhāvatī and most certainly attain enlightenment. An ability to 'ride upon' Other Power springs from confident trust ('faith') in the salvific ability of Amitābha. Reliance on Other Power has the advantage of being relatively easy, but it also overcomes the philosophical and religious problem of how it is possible solely through one's own finite and ultimately feeble deeds to attain a state of absolute unconditioned enlightenment, of Buddahood.[131] In the light of the form of Buddha-nature thought becoming prevalent in East Asian Buddhism, a great gap was opening up between the ultimate state of Buddahood and the conventional realm of saṃsāra. To seek to move from one to the other, from conditioned to unconditioned, is perhaps logically impossible. Religiously, morally, it could become a basis for spiritual pride.

Tanluan adopted the five forms of practice mentioned by 'Vasubandhu'. He devotes a great deal of space to the process of detailed visualization in meditation, which seems to

have particularly interested him.[132] He also emphasizes the virtues of calling on or recollecting the name of the Buddha Amitābha. The name, for Tanluan, conveys the essence of Amitābha, and that expresses infinite wisdom itself. Thus to recollect the name is to express the reality which is infinite wisdom.[133] The reference in the sūtra to calling on the name of Amitābha just 10 times means recollecting it perfectly. It does not mean recollecting it literally 10 times and no more. Numbers are not important. To call constantly, persistently, on Amitābha with a mind full of confident trust, a mind that is genuine and one-pointed, is to purify the mind of all its vicious deeds and tendencies. Hence there comes about rebirth in the Pure Land. Once the aspirant fundamentally abandons recourse to his or her own resources all activities can be seen as Other Power, the salvific action of Amitābha working through them. Through the power of Amitābha even the worst person, even one who has committed the five worst acts, can attain to the Pure Land – providing the miscreant has not reviled the Doctrine.[134] Once in the Pure Land and having attained enlightenment there and then in that very Pure Land itself, Tanluan asserts that the purpose now as an enlightened being is to 'return', to manifest spontaneously in multifarious ways in transformation bodies (see Ch. 8) as is appropriate for the benefit of others. This is done particularly through appearing in the world as great and compassionate Bodhisattvas. In so doing, the devotee himself participates in or expresses the beneficial and salvific activity of Amitābha. All this can take place, Tanluan holds, without needing actually to move from Sukhāvatī.[135]

Practising like this could become a religion for everyone. According to Daoxuan (Taohsüan; 596–667): 'Tanluan not only practiced the teachings of Amida [Amitābha] Buddha but also preached on them to all kinds of people, monks and nuns, laymen and laywomen, and even to non-Buddhists' (Matsumoto 1986: 38). It is a form of religion with potential for mass appeal, a religion for those who delve and spin, who feel they cannot make religious progress through their own feeble actions.

Daochuo's main contributions to Pure Land thought were contained in a work in which he responded to critics of the Pure Land way. Daochuo experienced directly barbarian invasions, war and all the horrors that go with it, famine, as well as persecution of Buddhism in China. He may himself have been forcibly laicized as a result. Perhaps for this reason he was particularly impressed by the idea that we are approaching the Last Days of the Dharma (Chinese: *mofa*; Japanese: *mappō*). 'As for me', he said, 'I live in a world aflame, and bear a sense of dread within' (Chappell 1996: 146). He came to the conclusion that in our age the most effective of spiritual practices is 'to repent our sins, to cultivate virtues, and to utter the Buddha's name' (Suzuki 1953: 157). The era in which we now live is not very suitable for the old Buddhist practices of spiritual development, which were only seriously viable in previous ages. To follow the 'path of the sages' of study, moral austerity, meditation and other traditional practices in order to attain enlightenment in this world of ours is perhaps no longer even possible. That age has passed. Nowadays 'not a single person attains enlightenment even though countless beings are cultivating Buddhism' (Chappell 1996: 153). Indeed, for us even past ages do not seem to have helped. We all have the Buddha-nature,

and in infinite rebirths we must have met Buddhas innumerable times. Yet we still have not become enlightened. Moreover, when we are reborn more often than not it is in unfavourable destinies like the hells. The only sensible alternative now, therefore, is to enter by the 'gate of the Pure Land'.[136] By this gate it is not necessary to still the passions but only single-mindedly to take up a rosary and chant the name of Amitābha, rejecting this world and aiming for rebirth not through our own efforts but through the power of Amitābha and his wonderful vows. That way we shall find ourselves somewhere definitely nicer, in the Pure Land.[137]

In replies to his critics Daochuo agreed that, of course, the Pure Land is a conventional realm, an actual place with definite characteristics. It has all the appropriate marvellous features. Mahāyāna, however, does not confine itself to a search for the unconditioned or for some sort of unqualifiable absolute reality. In the Mahāyāna we are repeatedly urged not to neglect the conventional truth. The Pure Land is a conventional reality. Certainly, as an expression of the Buddha's compassion in order to help others, it is a skilful means. It is for the benefit of sentient beings that otherwise would have no possibility of spiritual development. That means us. It is true, moreover, that the Pure Land is sometimes said in sūtras like the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa* to be in reality the same as a fully-purified mind. But this does not mean that talk of a 'Pure Land' is just metaphorical or symbolic, or a strategy by the Buddha to induce us to practise the Dharma with incentives that need to be demythologized. It does not follow that there is no such place as Sukhāvatī so that we cannot be reborn there. For those who cannot aspire through their own endeavours to such exalted heights as a fully-purified mind there is also what we are talking about here, the Pure Land in the west, a conventionally real realm into which one can indeed actually be reborn after death (just as we have been reborn here as humans). It has as much reality as we do, and therefore as much reality as our rebirth will have.

Again, it is all very well being a good Mahāyāna Bodhisattva and advocating out of compassion for others rebirth in our own contaminated world rather than in the Pure Land. But let us be realistic. Who is sufficiently strong to do this without being tainted by it? Who is going to claim to be a great Bodhisattva beyond all impurities? If we are honest we can see that it is better to aim for enlightenment through the Pure Land of Sukhāvatī, and after that act to help sentient beings. It should be clear, however, that the Pure Land is not a sensuous paradise. This is not substituting some sort of pleasant heaven for a truly Buddhist goal of enlightenment. Sukhāvatī is not a realm simply of indulgence. Otherwise it would not be a *pure* land. It would be a land tainted by impurities such as sensuousness, craving, and attachment. Finally, there is one last point: How can reciting Amitābha's name, you might ask, have such dramatic results? This, says Daochuo, is simply because the name of the Buddha Amitābha is a very powerful name. It is the result of nothing other than the Buddha's own immense merits.[138]

Daochuo was the teacher of Shandao, who is held by some (such as Hōnen in Japan, for example) to have been an emanation of Amitābha himself.[139] He lived in the Chinese capital of Chang'an, and was a contemporary of Xuanzang and Fazang. Unlike those masters,

however, Shandao was not particularly concerned to make an impact upon the imperial court. He rather concentrated on spreading the message of Amitābha and his Pure Land among ordinary people. Shandao is said to have attracted countless followers, some of whom are reputed to have been sufficiently enthusiastic for Sukhāvatī, and disparaging of what the Tibetans call 'this precious human body', to commit suicide in order to hasten their rebirth and consequent enlightenment for the benefit of sentient beings. But in spite of a legend that Shandao himself eventually committed suicide there is evidence that he did not approve of such dramatic public demonstrations of faith in Amitābha's salvific efficacy.[140] Shandao is said also to have made and distributed thousands of copies of the *Sukhāvatīvyūha Sūtra*, and painted some 300 paintings of the Pure Land itself.[141] Thus he embraced in his propaganda those who could read, and also those who were illiterate but could immediately grasp the message when confronted by a painting of the attractions of Sukhāvatī contrasted with the drudgery and real misery of everyday peasant life.

Shandao's Pure Land teaching is contained in literary form principally in his four-volume commentary to the **Amitāyurbuddhānusmṛti Sūtra*. In spite of his own considerable learning and ability in traditional Buddhist discipline and meditation (he is reputed to have had the 'spirit of extreme asceticism'; Pas 1987: 68), according to Shandao queen Vaidehī in the sūtra is intended not as a sage or a Bodhisattva, or to stand for an ordained member of the monastic order. Rather, she is a symbol of the ordinary common mortal, anyone, imprisoned in suffering and simply seeking a way to a better world. Thus the teaching of the **Amitāyurbuddhānusmṛti Sūtra* is a teaching for all beings, especially accessible to the simple ordinary common folk.[142] Shandao's own starting point is yet again the spiritual decay of the age, and his own incapacity for spiritual growth: 'I am actually an ordinary sinful being who has been, from time immemorial, sunken in and carried down by the current of birth-and-death. Any hope to be helped out of this current has been wholly denied to me' (Kaneko 1965: 52). This is then universalized. All people, or almost all people, in this present age are in reality in the same situation as Shandao himself. Buddhas have been teaching for infinite aeons, and yet we are still not enlightened. Now there is no Buddha on the earth. What chance do any of us have? We are all embedded in unskilful acts – in sin. Because of this, confession and repentence becomes an integral and important part of Shandao's vision of the religious life.[143] Since we have all committed even the five great misdeeds, if not in this life then in previous ones, the only final recourse has to be exclusively to Amitābha, who vowed in the sūtra to save all beings, and who is capable of saving even the lowest miscreants. For this is clearly stated in the **Amitāyurbuddhānusmṛti Sūtra*.

What must we do to be saved from all this? First, we should have serene trust and confidence ('faith') in Amitābha and his vows. This serene trust is said to have three features. It must be sincere, that is, it must be a real trust. Also it should be a deep trust. Finally, it should be accompanied by an overriding desire for rebirth in Amitābha's Pure Land of Sukhāvatī. Merit should be transferred accordingly. These three aspects of serene trust apply to all beings. If one is missing, then there will be no rebirth in the Pure Land (Bloom 1965: 14).

Supposing one has this deep and sincere trust in Amitābha. Then what? It is necessary for the devotee to engage in five forms of religious activity directed towards Amitābha. The principal practice is vocally reciting the name of the Buddha, constantly and in all situations. This is said to be the act that truly determines rebirth in the Pure Land, and can obviously be practised by those in all walks of life.[144] Auxiliary practices are chanting or reciting the sūtras of Amitābha, visualization and meditating on Amitābha, worshipping and bowing to Amitābha and his images, and praising and making offerings to the Buddha Amitābha. Although these practices are soteriologically auxiliary, they were seen nevertheless by Shandao as valuable and were recommended for those who could do them and for whom they would be spiritually helpful. In particular, Shandao was a monk who was personally concerned with the use of the **Amitāyurbuddhānusmṛti Sūtra* in meditation and visualization practice. Recitation of the name of the Buddha could thus be combined with other practices aimed not just at achieving rebirth in the Pure Land but also at meditative absorption and visions of Amitābha and his Pure Land in this very life. Visualization practice, meditation retreats closer to the older sense of *buddhānusmṛti*, were very often an integral part of Chinese Pure Land Buddhism. The resultant visions could be extremely helpful, and Shandao enriched his commentary to the sūtra with his own deep experiences of *buddhānusmṛti* visualization.[145]

From Shandao springs the parable of the white path. This is an important teaching aid and oft-repeated image in subsequent Pure Land thought. A man is travelling to the west when before him stretch two rivers. On the left is a river of fire. On the right, is water. Between the two is a white path 'barely four or five inches wide'. From east to west is 100 steps. The fire scorches one side of the path. The waves ceaselessly wash the other. As if this is not enough, in the east where our traveller stands is a band of hooligans and wild animals, seeking to kill him. The poor man is seized with terror, but resolves to try to follow the path. At that very moment he hears a voice behind him from his own bank: 'Friend, just follow this path resolutely and there will be no danger of death. To stay here is to die.' And on the west bank there is someone calling out: 'Come straight ahead, single-mindedly and with fixed purpose. I can protect you. Never fear falling into the fire or water!' As our traveller sets off, however, the hooligans call to him: 'Come back – we won't hurt you!' Nevertheless, he goes resolutely forward, reaches the west bank safely, and 'he is greeted by his good friend and there is no end of joy'.[146]

In brief, the hither shore in the parable stands for the world of saṃsāra; the further shore in the west that of Sukhāvatī. The hooligans and animals, seeming friends, are our senses, consciousnesses and so on. Fire is anger and hatred; water, greed and affection. The white path is the aspiration for rebirth in the Pure Land, which actually arises amid the passions themselves. The voice from the hither shore is that of Śākyamuni, who has disappeared from sight but continues to point the true way. From the west bank comes the voice of Amitābha, his vow to save all beings. In such an image, easily understood and remembered by the lowest peasant, is encapsulated the message of Pure Land thought. Paintings of the period were fond of such pedagogic devices as depictions of the hells

on one side and the Pure Land on the other – as was common in many medieval church wall paintings in the West. Shandao has himself been linked to the popularization of hell-paintings in China: 'Leading a life of strict renunciation and self-denial combined with an energetic devotion to the salvation of others, he was considered a Buddhist saint' (Pas 1987: 70).

I have spoken of the three Chinese Pure Land advocates accepted as patriarchs by Japanese Pure Land Buddhism. There were, however, other great Pure Land teachers in China. After the traumas of the An Lushan rebellion in the middle of the eighth century the increasing popularity of Pure Land among the masses, together with, perhaps, a growing pessimism concerning this world, meant that Pure Land forms of Buddhism eventually came to the notice of the imperial court. Fazhao (Fa-chao; died *c*. 820) was instrumental in this growing awareness, and was posthumously granted by the emperor the title of 'Master of Great Enlightenment'. He is said to have been the incarnation (or perhaps emanation) of Shandao, and to have had numerous and varied visions including a number of visions of Amitābha.

In one vision experienced while practising the *pratyutpanna samādhi*, Fazhao was taught by Amitābha a method of reciting the name of the Buddha using five different rhythms, a method described as a 'priceless and rare treasure'. Such recitation became part of individual and group ritual activity that might also include the burning of incense in honour of the Buddha, prostrations, confession, taking vows, the dedication of merits and so on. The Buddha told Fazhao of the great benefits to people who practised this way that would come after the monk had transmitted these teachings to humankind. At death they would be welcomed personally by Amitābha into his Pure Land.[147]

Fazhao was also responsible for the standardization of the name to be recited as *amituo fo*, the Chinese transliteration of the name 'Amitābha Buddha'. The oft-repeated utterance thus becomes *na-mo a-mi-tuo fo* – 'Adoration [or prostration] to Amitābha Buddha'. In Japanese pronunciation this becomes *namu amida butsu*. Its repetition came to be called in Chinese *nianfo* – 'recollecting the Buddha'. In Japanese, this is pronounced *nenbutsu* (or *nembutsu*). In both cases this is in origin simply the Chinese translation of *buddhānusmṛti*. Hence the development of Pure Land forms of Buddhism in East Asia, with its increasing stress on the importance of repetition of the name of Amitābha Buddha, is a development within the Mahāyāna context of multiple Buddhas in their pure lands of the very ancient Buddhist practice of *buddhānusmṛti*.[148] Here too we find the visionary and consoling properties (as the antidote to fear) that *buddhānusmṛti* always had in Buddhism, and also the role it was often given in Buddhist tradition as a practice directly conducive to the attainment of nirvāṇa.

The increasing stress in East Asia (particularly Japan) on the sufficiency of *simply* repeating the Buddha's name reflects, as Paul Harrison has pointed out, the way in which Pure Land masters used the practice in the Final Days to undermine concern with the self and to emphasize a complete surrender to 'the Absolute Other', Amitābha, in response to even

subtle habits of egoity. Harrison speaks of its 'simple purificatory logic, that concentration on the good dispels the bad' (1992a: 227–8).

Cimin (Tz'u-min; otherwise known as Huiri (Hui-jih); 680–748) was a Pure Land master who visited India and also contributed to the growing rapprochement between Chan and Pure Land practice. His attack on the Chan of his day bears notable similarities with the criticisms of the monk Mahāyāna's Chan half a century or so later in Tibet. These Chan practitioners, he said, argue that there is no need to recite the sūtras, or the name of Amitābha, or erect statues, serve teachers and elders, or indeed do any other virtuous deeds. Their reasoning is that all these actions belong to the conditioned and not the unconditioned. The same can be said of all the perfections except for practising Chan (which here must mean the perfection of wisdom). But this is wrong, says Cimin, for we can see that the sūtras themselves, the word of the Buddha, teach otherwise. In real life these so-called 'adepts' of Chan do a little meditation in the evening, and the rest of the day they neglect discipline and sleep or run riot (Suzuki 1935: 357–8). Actually, Cimin notes, to attain enlightenment through Chan is very difficult. But we know that recourse to Amitābha is easy, and thence with his aid we can attain enlightenment and help sentient beings. Nevertheless, within the context of the Amitābha practice it may also be possible and indeed it may be positively beneficial to practise Chan.[149]

In spite of the Pure Land exclusivity of Shandao, an exclusivity mirrored in Japan by Hōnen and Shinran, such single-minded focus on just one Buddha or just one practice has not been typical of Chinese Buddhism. The Chan master Yanshou (Yen-shou; 904–75) is commonly held to have been instrumental in a positive attempt to bring the practice of Chan together with Pure Land on the basis that everything is after all but Mind.[150] As the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa* teaches, the Pure Land is in fact really a pure mind. Many texts state that the Buddha is in reality none other than one's own mind. Moreover, both Chan and Pure Land aim to cut egoistic grasping and to purify the mind of the practitioner. When the Pure Land practitioner speaks of abandoning Own Power and having recourse to Other Power, when he speaks of the impossibility of enlightening himself by his own efforts, what is this but just another statement of the basic Buddhist teaching of not-Self (Ch'en 1964: 404–5)? This blending of Chan and Pure Land practice became further established in China during the Ming and Qing (Ch'ing; Manchu) dynasties, particularly in the thought of Zhuhong (Chu-hung; 1535–1615). In Chinese Buddhism to the present day it is common to combine Chan and Pure Land practice in Chan monasteries.

Holmes Welch describes the graded Pure Land/Chan practice he encountered in pre-communist China. Beginners would recite the name of Amitābha while fixing their eyes on his image. When they had become more experienced they would mentally visualize the form of the Buddha. But the most advanced practice is to reach the point of having no Buddha to visualize, and no self to do the visualization. This is said to be pure nondual awareness (Welch 1967: 399). Moreover, constant repetition of the name of the Buddha could be used as a handy technique for engendering meditative absorption and purifying the mind. At

bottom, therefore, it could be urged that there is no fundamental difference between Pure Land and Chan.

But really such a Chan use of recitation (what Jones 2001: 232 calls 'mind-only Pure Land') is rather remote from that envisaged by Pure Land masters like Shandao. This use of reciting the name of Buddha Amitābha as a mere technique in order to calm and purify the mind as contributory towards the goal of Chan enlightenment experience is totally oriented towards oneself, the one who is practising. That is true even if its use in meditation is a meritorious technique for overcoming egoity in enlightenment. It thus exemplifies Own Power, and makes no reference to the crucial roles of Other Power, the presence and actions of Amitābha, his salvific vows, and the (conventional) actuality of his Pure Land. As we shall see, this Chan (Zen) use of reciting the Buddha's name is much further still from the Pure Land practice of a Japanese like Shinran.

Hōnen Shōnin (1133–1212)

Hōnen was by no means the first Japanese Buddhist to turn to Amitābha and his Pure Land. Indeed devotion to Amitābha had been present in Japan since at least the middle of the seventh century and by the twelfth century it was becoming quite popular. But the way in which Hōnen placed his whole hope in attaining Sukhāvatī by means of simply invoking Amitābha's name in *nenbutsu*, through relying on the salvific power of the Buddha's vows, did mark a new and enormously influential phase in the tradition.[151]

The civil warfare, famine, disease, economic collapse, and general misery in Japan which accompanied the end of the Heian era (794–1185) and the ushering in of the Kamakura age (1185–1333) gave an immense impetus there to the growth of Pure Land forms of Buddhism, for all could vividly appreciate the wish of queen Vaidehī for another world of happiness far from the present troubles. We have already seen that these ghastly sufferings and the accompanying 'other worldliness' gave a strong incentive to the development of the theory of the Last Days (*mappō*). The problem was how are we to live and practise religion when the end is nigh? And how are we to avoid falling into hell?[152] The reply, broadly speaking, was to simplify, concentrating on the one practice that is said to be sufficient for salvation. This might be found, for example, in Dōgen's austere Sōtō Zen meditation, or in Nichiren's combative advocacy of the *Lotus Sūtra*, expressed in the chanting of its title. It was also to embrace further the laity. Pure Land Buddhism was ideally suited to respond to this situation, for in China it had already presented itself as a response to the declining spiritual age. The Japanese sufferings gave it a new urgency, and it responded with further simplification, a complete abandonment to the Buddha's compassion, and an ever-widening popular and non-monastic basis.[153]

Hōnen became a Tendai monk on Mt Hiei at the age of 9, and appears to have graduated a distinguished scholar. Yet, he felt that this had not brought him anywhere nearer to enlightenment. Like other Tendai monks of the age, but with an honesty they perhaps lacked, Hōnen felt

> that I am one whose eyes are blind to the truth and whose feet, paralyzed, are unable to walk the Holy Path. . . . I bitterly regret that day and night my thoughts turn in the direction of prestige and money.
>
> (Yui-en 1961: vii)

And elsewhere he said:

> There are many Buddhisms. Yet a cursory overview reveals to us that none of them goes beyond the tripartite teaching of Precepts, Meditation, and Wisdom. . . . As for myself, I do not observe a single precept; I have never succeeded at meditation; and I have not gained the just wisdom that staves off ungainly thought.[154]

Hōnen began to study the principal work of Genshin (942–1017), an influential earlier Japanese advocate of Pure Land practice within the framework of the Tendai tradition. This work had a profound effect on Hōnen, although he came to reject Genshin's emphasis on visualization practice as too difficult – and, quite frankly, Hōnen could not see the point:

> Even if spiritual novices are successful in creating a vision of Amida, in beauty it will never rival the carvings of the great masters, nor could a vision of the Pure Land be as lovely as the real flowers of the cherry, plum, peach or pear.
>
> (Matsunaga and Matsunaga 1974/6: II, 59)

What are visions seen through visualization meditation but second-hand images floating before the eyes? In his search Hōnen is said to have read the entire Buddhist Canon five times, and yet he still felt as far away from enlightenment as ever. Eventually, however, according to tradition, at the age of 42 or 43 Hōnen was inspired by a reading of Shandao to let go entirely, to have recourse totally and solely to reciting the name of Amitābha as the only practice suitable for the present age. In the ghastly era in which we live, only Other Power, the power of Amitābha's infinite compassion, can save us. What is more, simple recitation of the name of Amitābha is alone sufficient for that salvation.[155] Additional striving in visualization meditation leading to meditative absorption and visions – which, as we have seen, was commonly integrated with vocal recitation in Chinese Pure Land practice, and indeed in earlier Japanese Buddhism too – was held by Hōnen to be quite unnecessary. In this, Hōnen was radically at variance with the view of Pure Land practice held by his contemporaries. He was advocating as the only possible practice in the present age a simple practice which had previously been thought in its very simplicity to be inferior and suitable only for the incapable, the evil, and as a last resort for the dying. Perhaps not surprisingly, Hōnen's approach had wide popular appeal.

Hōnen's principal work is known as the *Senchakushū*, which during his lifetime he hoped would remain secret and was published only after his death.[156] But Hōnen's view is simply stated in a 'One Page Document' (*Ichimai kishōmon*) which is reasonably attributed to him. He is said to have composed it just a couple of days before he died, at the request of a disciple, in order to stress the basic simplicity and main points of his teaching. By reciting the

Buddha's name, Hōnen states, I do not mean meditation, or reciting it as a result of studying and understanding its deep meaning. No – all I mean is simply reciting the Buddha's name (*nenbutsu*) with no doubt that this will lead to rebirth in the Pure Land:

> Even if you study Śākyamuni's whole teaching, you should still become an ignorant man who doesn't know a word and regards himself as ignorant as a nun or a layman. Never behave as a wise man, but single-mindedly recite the nembutsu.[157]

The spirit in which this recitation is done is, as Hōnen states elsewhere, one of 'joy . . . as high as the heavens above and as deep as the earth beneath . . . always . . . returning thanks for the great blessedness of having in this life come in contact with the Original Vow of the Amida Buddha'.[158] Nothing else is necessary – all is contained in this. Indeed it is positively wrong to imagine that there is more to it than this. No matter how learned one is, one should be like a simple person and simply recite the *nenbutsu*.[159] Again, in his letters Hōnen states that no matter how great a sinner one is, one should not give way to doubts. Amitābha does not hate anyone. Although in reciting the *nenbutsu* one should have, as Shandao taught, the three factors of sincerity, deep trust and desire for rebirth in the Pure Land, still, if one has complete trust in Amitābha's vow and recites the *nenbutsu* one already has these three factors (Burtt 1955: 213–16; cf. *Senchakushū* 1998: Ch. 8).

All that is necessary is to recite the name of the Buddha with complete trust in Amitābha's vows. If so, even the worst sinner will most certainly be saved. There remains a Japanese folk song from about the same period in which the singer laments:

> I'm shunned
> By the ten thousand Buddhas,
> For having hunted and fished,
> To live this sentient life
> What must I do for salvation?
> (Tetsurō 1971: 102)

Hōnen himself is said to have met some poor and elderly fisherfolk who were terrified and depressed because of the consequences of their occupation. He preached to them the salvific power of Amitābha's name. Overjoyed, they went on their way, catching fish by day and reciting the *nenbutsu* by night (Eliot 1935: 265). '[A]ny sinner who chants Amida's name is saved *as a sinner*. . . . Salvation . . . is certain even if he expires on the battlefield.'[160] A prostitute is reputed to have been told to give up her occupation if she can, because it is indeed very sinful. But if she cannot give it up, 'then keep reciting *nembutsu* just as you are. . . . In fact, women like you are the most welcome guests of Amida's Vow' (Machida 1999: 12). In one illustrative story the monk Jungen is said to have attained the Pure Land even after having sex with his own daughter (Stone, in Payne and Tanaka 2004: 97).

Hōnen impressed all who met him with his humility and attractive personality. Nichiren, on the other hand, who did not meet Hōnen but hated him for his emphasis on Amitābha

and corresponding neglect of Śākyamuni, asserted that after death Hōnen became an evil spirit. Sir Charles Eliot commented that Hōnen's

> great personal influence was due to his singularly amiable character, which made him beloved of all his friends and acquaintances. . . . He offered in the gentlest and most persuasive form a simple and attractive teaching . . . which offered salvation to those who could justify themselves neither by learning nor by good works.
>
> (Eliot 1935: 266–7)

Hōnen was a monk and consumed neither meat nor alcohol. As an austere Tendai monk himself, Hōnen lectured on the Buddhist precepts, continued to take part in Tendai ordination rites, and even ordained laity for the cure of illness.[161] The extent to which Hōnen publicly differed from his Tendai predecessors is thus a matter of some dispute.[162] Nevertheless, Hōnen's teaching that the *nenbutsu* as simple recitation is sufficient for salvation, and that Amitābha saves even the lowest sinner, appears radical with implications that could leave it open to charges of antinomianism. Why not do evil, or at least behave as one likes, since providing we recite the *nenbutsu* Amitābha will save us anyway? There is no notion that we are saved through our inadequate moral deeds, but only through the Other Power of Amitābha. This argument provided Hōnen with a real problem. In a nine-point attack upon his teaching (the *Kōfukuji sōjō*, a petition drawn up for the Court), Hōnen's ideological opponents (who were many) accused him, among other things, of rejecting the Vinaya, and claiming that 'those who are worried about such sins as gambling or meat eating failed to place total reliance upon the power of Amida'.[163] It is known that certain of Hōnen's disciples publicly broke the Vinaya code as presented for monks, eating meat and declaring that one should not respect any Buddhas other than Amitābha.[164]

The highly-respected scholar and visionary of the Shingon and Kegon (Chinese: Huayan) schools on the other hand, Myōe Shōnin (Kōben; 1173–1232), building on certain statements derived from the *Senchakushū*, in a bitter attack on the exclusivity of Hōnen's approach to the *nenbutsu* accused him of neglecting the *bodhicitta* (Japanese: *bodaishin*), the 'Awakening Mind'.[165] The concern is not with saving sentient beings, not with the necessity of developing compassion, but simply with rebirth in the Pure Land. As such, Hōnen's teaching cannot be Mahāyāna – in fact it is not Buddhism at all. It is just the non-Buddhist search for heaven in another guise (Shōjun 1971: 72 ff.; Tanabe 1992: 97 ff.). In teaching such things Hōnen, says Myōe, 'was despicable, no better than a sentient rock, a priest who is no longer Buddhist, the devil's messenger. . . . An infinite number of beings have been born in Japan, . . . but no one has spat out foolishness like this' (Tanabe 1992: 82, 106). Hōnen is 'a frightful enemy of Śākyamuni'. What he advocates is 'heresy . . . not the teaching of the Buddha' (*ibid.*: 108). Actually, in the twelfth chapter of the *Senchakushū* (1998: 129) Hōnen shows he is rather ambivalent about the explicit need for the *bodhicitta*. At times he makes it clear that he does not deny the *bodhicitta*, and he advocates it for all those who seek rebirth in the Pure Land. Indeed it can happen that with the arising of the *bodhicitta* someone may begin to aspire for rebirth in the Pure Land. But towards the end of that chapter (*ibid.*:

135–6) he does rather suggest that at the present time, and for rebirth in the Pure Land, the *bodhicitta* is not actually necessary. One suspects Hōnen would have answered Myōe Shōnin that in the present age only by attaining enlightenment through the Pure Land can a person actually fulfil the requirements of *bodhicitta*. Hence direct and explicit concern with the *bodhicitta*, and the difficult practices necessary to cause it to arise, are not necessary. Nevertheless, far from neglecting *bodhicitta*, Hōnen is implicitly embracing it in what is now the only realistic way.[166]

Eventually, as a result of a scandal involving some of Hōnen's more radical disciples (an alleged secret love-affair with an imperial concubine), the Master was defrocked and exiled. Several of his disciples were tortured and executed. He accepted this humbly, ever grateful to Amitābha for his compassion. After Hōnen's death the blocks used to print his *Senchakushū* were destroyed by 'marauding Tendai monks'.[167] There was even an attempt to destroy his tomb and throw his body into the river. His followers, on the other hand, came effectively to deify him as the founder of their Pure Land school and a manifestation of the Bodhisattva Mahāsthāmaprāpta.[168] Hōnen himself responded to his critics with a seven-point pledge which he drew up for the adherence of his followers. In this he stepped back from any suggestion that morality may be unimportant. His followers must pledge in particular not to criticize other traditions, encourage or engage in immorality, or advocate their own views as those of the Master.[169] Hōnen asserted in his letters that one should on no account despise the excellent sūtras, or any part of the teaching of Śākyamuni. Nowhere in the sūtras does the Buddha encourage one to do vicious acts. And,

> while believing that even a man guilty of the ten evil deeds and the five deadly sins may be born into the Pure Land, let us, as far as we are concerned, not commit even the smallest sins. If this is true of the wicked, how much more of the good.[170]

Yet, to state that his followers should adhere to the moral code is not to say why it is necessary, given Hōnen's teachings. What effect does morality have on salvation?[171] At times Hōnen rejects doing wrong ('accumulating bad karma'), including breaking the Vinaya rules, primarily apparently for the practical reason that such behaviour would lead to problems in really doing the one thing that was essential, simply reciting the name of the Buddha. It is *unskilful* to behave immorally. Morality leads to a 'secure life' and, he said, 'you should care for yourself as much as possible' (*Senchakushū* English Translation Project 1998: 13–14).

Moreover, is not any recourse to morality in order to facilitate repetition of the name of the Buddha still relying one one's Own Power rather than the Other Power of the Buddha? And how many times is it necessary to recite the name of Amitābha Buddha in order to be saved? Whatever the answer, one or many, could not this too be seen as recourse to Own Power? Hōnen seems to have held that chanting the name of Amitābha removes the effects of vicious acts ('bad karma'), and consequently providing it is done in the right spirit of reliance on Amitābha the more it is chanted the better it will be. It will hence ensure rebirth in the Pure Land notwithstanding previous vicious acts. He appears anyway to have felt

that constant repetition is useful for disciplinary reasons (Bloom 1965: 21). He himself is said to have recited the *nenbutsu* some 60,000 times a day. One of Hōnen's disciples is reputed to have reached 84,000 repetitions a day.[172] If there is time left after repeating the name of the Buddha, then one should engage in good works (Andrews 2004: 98–9). Nevertheless, Hōnen argued that it does not follow that frequent repetition equals Own Power. From which it seems to follow that the sheer amount of repetition does not in itself literally earn salvation. Even one utterance of the *nenbutsu* could be Own Power if done in the wrong spirit, while many utterances are not Own Power if chanted with complete trust in Amitābha and his great vow.[173] There is also some lack of clarity as to how far Hōnen held that if at the time of death the mind is in a state of evil then, no matter how much someone has repeated the *nenbutsu*, that person will lose the Pure Land. If he did hold this view then it would be appear to be necessary for that reason too to repeat constantly the name of Amitābha – to 'watch and wait'.[174]

It was traditional in Japan for a devotee of Amitābha, at the time of death, to lie facing a picture or image of Amitābha and his Bodhisattvas, placed in the west of his or her room. A five-coloured cord could be used to connect the dying person with the image. Many of the Japanese paintings of the Amitābha trinity (Amitābha flanked by Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta) were no doubt used for this purpose. At Hōnen's death, however, we are told in some sources that he said no cord or image was necessary. For the last 10 years or so he had constantly before his eyes a vision of the Pure Land, Amitābha, and his attendant Bodhisattvas. Whatever Hōnen thought of visions, perhaps they accompanied him to his grave.

Shinran Shōnin (1173–1262)

Hōnen's tradition, which in the generations after his death split into two main schools, is known as *Jōdo Shū*, the Pure Land Sect. Shinran, as a disciple of Hōnen, always considered that he was simply transmitting his Master's teaching in all its purity. Indeed, comparing himself disparagingly to Hōnen, Shinran reflected: 'The awareness of a wise teacher [Hōnen] – wise within but ignorant without. The thoughts of this foolish one [Shinran] – ignorant within but wise without' (Unno, in Foard *et al.* 1996: 331). For this reason, perhaps, Shinran, while often worshipped as its Founder and a manifestation of Amitābha or Avalokiteśvara, is frequently not included as a patriarch even in his own tradition. This tradition of Shinran has come to be known as *Jōdo Shin Shū* – the True Pure Land Sect.

It is very difficult to disentangle legend from fact in the story of Shinran's life. Until relatively recently there was even a doubt expressed in some quarters as to whether Shinran ever really existed. These doubts have now been dispelled, largely due to the discovery in 1921 of letters written by Shinran's wife after his death. The fact that Shinran married (possibly more than once) and had children is itself of enormous importance for, like Hōnen, Shinran trained as a Tendai monk on Mt Hiei. He became a close disciple of Hōnen as a result, we are told, of instruction in a dream by the Japanese prince and Buddhist hero Shōtoku

Taishi. Shinran was sent into exile at the same time as his Master. During the time of his exile Shinran came into close contact with the common peasantry and their everyday problems and fears. Initially he began to see his mission as to save the ordinary people of the remote area of Japan to which he had been sent, and eventually to minister to all people, but particularly the lowest peasantry throughout Japan (Bloom 1968: 16 ff.).

Shinran married probably soon after going into exile.[175] He was an ex-monk unused to lay life. In his own words he was neither priest nor layman. Although married he dressed and looked like a monk. He was legally no longer a monk, but he could not and would not assume the worldly attitudes and aspirations of a layman. Eventually pardoned, as was Hōnen, Shinran remained a married layman. He established no temples, but rather his followers met in private houses – even though such private groups were actually illegal at that time.[176]

Shinran's married state was a visible symbol of a teaching which denied the validity of the lay/monk distinction, since Own Power is in no way possible as a means to liberation. In the eyes of Amitābha there is no distinction between monk and laity; all can become enlightened, enlightenment is not the concern of the monastic orders alone. It is possible that Shinran thought of marriage as a state in which the partners help to develop each other in following the spiritual path. The existence of children (one of whom, Zenran, gave Shinran so much trouble that he was eventually disowned by his father), on the other hand, eventually led to the development of a blood-lineage within the Jōdo Shin Shū which has continued down to the present day. With the growth of great and powerful land-owning Shin Shū temples in the centuries after the death of Shinran, eventually complete with private armies, the Jōdo Shin Shū hierarchs at times looked more like feudal barons than simple devotees of Amitābha.

But then – Amitābha's vow (the eighteenth vow, which is of crucial importance to Jōdo Shin Shū) is precisely for those enmeshed in worldly passions, the greedy, the angry, the ignorant, the vicious, those who otherwise have no hope. Shinran's principal work is known as the *Kyōgyōshinshō*, a series of extracts, with his own commentary, from the scriptures and the writings of the Shin Shū patriarchs.[177] His teaching is found in its most accessible form, however, in the *Tannishō*, a short work written by Yui-en, one of Shinran's disciples (or 'friends'). It is in two parts. In the first part Yui-en gives Shinran's oral teachings as he remembered them from the Master himself. In part two, Yui-en clarified Shinran's teaching on a number of issues on which disputes or misinterpretations had arisen since Shinran's death.

Amitābha, Shinran says, set out precisely to save those incapable of saving themselves, 'the foolish being[s] full of blind passions'. Amitābha's vow is hence precisely for people like Shinran himself, he observes, and that is why he feels it to be all the more worthy of his trust and reliance (Hirota 1982: 27). His vow is for those lowest beings who cannot save themselves through their Own Power. Yui-en comments that one should not dispute with or defame the advocates of Own Power. But as for us, we are simply incapable of that difficult path (*ibid.*: 31). Shinran described himself as 'drowned in a broad sea of lust' and wandering

'confusedly in the great mountain of fame'. 'O how shameful, pitiful' (Bloom 1965: 29). He is not the kind of person who can become a Buddha through the Own Power path of strenuous religious practices. He is definitely a sinner, definitely destined for hell. Therefore what can he do? He is going to hell anyway, so there is nothing to be lost in taking a gamble and following what Hōnen taught: ' "Just say the Name and be saved by Amida"; nothing else is involved' (Hirota 1982: 22–3). It was on Amitābha's vow that Shinran based his entire hope:

> When I consider deeply the Vow of Amida . . . I realize that it was entirely for the sake of myself alone! Then how I am filled with gratitude for the Primal Vow, in which Amida settled on saving me, though I am burdened thus greatly with karma.
>
> (Hirota 1982: 43)

Like Hōnen, Shinran extrapolated from his own sense of immorality and powerlessness to the general human condition itself. Not only is he riddled with vice, but we are all like this. We cannot perform a non-egoistic act, and for this reason we cannot perform a truly good act.[178] We are self-centred and therefore, compared with the Buddha, we unenlightened beings are evil by our very nature as unenlightened beings. Acts, consequently, cannot lead to Buddhahood, and attaining Buddhahood has nothing to do with earning it through merit or good deeds (Hirota 1982: 29–30; Bloom 1965: 32 ff.).

The only meaning that can be given to the notion of egolessness, not-Self, is to 'let go'; 'it is when a person leaves both good and evil to karmic recompense and entrusts wholly to the Primal Vow that he is one with Other Power' (Yui-en's words). Amitābha saves despite sins (Hirota 1982: 34). If Buddhism is based on the doctrine of not-Self, then Shinran claims that Other Power alone is completely letting go, complete abandonment of all notions of self. As Yoshifumi Ueda puts it:

> In Shinran's Buddhism, one's mind is transformed by the Buddha's power, so that one acquires the Buddha's wisdom. This realization of shinjin ['trust', i.e. self-abandonment] is not a union of our minds and the Buddha's mind brought about through a gradual deepening of human trust or acceptance – perhaps this is a fundamental distinction between shinjin and our ordinary conceptions of faith. Rather, it comes about through an utter negation in which all our efforts and designs fall away into meaninglessness, being found both powerless and tainted by egocentric attachments. In this negation our minds of blind passions are transformed into wisdom-compassion, and at the same time they remain precisely as they are – or rather, their fundamental nature becomes radically clear for the first time. With the wisdom that we realize as shinjin, we are enabled to see ourselves as we are – the foolish being whose every act is conditioned by eons of karmic evil and dominated by passions, thoroughly devoid of truth and reality – and also to know, and to be filled with gratitude for, the working of the Primal Vow.[179]

But Shinran does not want us to think that his teaching enables us to behave as we like. He does not deny the karmic law – if we do evil we still suffer – and, as Shinran said in a

letter, '[d]o not take a liking to poison just because there is an antidote' (Hirota 1982: 34). Shinran seems to have thought that the real devotee would cease to struggle to do good deeds in a contrived egoistic way, as a means to a desired end. Egoistic good deeds must really be a contradiction in terms. Rather, truly good deeds, like the *nenbutsu*, if they are to occur at all will flow naturally from his or her inner nature. They will hence come not from the ego-ridden individual, who cannot really do good deeds at all, but rather from that nature which is Amitābha himself. None of this is in any way an act of (one's own) merit. One simply lets go, and truly trusts in Amitābha's salvific promises. Nor is it some sort of 'religious act', or religious duty, on one's own part. In fact, even the voice that recites the *nenbutsu* is not one's own voice but the voice of Amitābha issuing from the mouth of the one who is reciting.[180]

It could be argued that it is in Shinran's reading of the Pure Land way that we find something not austere but genuinely easy. But I am not at all sure that is correct, at least psychologically. We have seen that there were those who would not adopt the way of the Pure Land because it was alleged to be easy and therefore could not be the genuine Bodhisattva path at all. For them it was very difficult to accept an easy path. For Shinran we cannot be saved by Own Power (Japanese: *jiriki*), but only through Other Power (Japanese: *tariki*). Put another way, we can be saved only through self-abandonment to Amitābha and his vow. But Shinran does not mean by 'self-abandonment' an intentional volition on our part, for if salvation came from self-abandonment and we produced the self-abandonment then salvation would be the result of Own Power. The self-abandonment[181] which Shinran refers to is a complete letting go, and therefore cannot come from the egoistic vice-ridden individual. In that sense the self-abandonment of Jōdo Shin Shū is very difficult. The ego is always egoistic – it is difficult to let go completely and trust Amitābha's vows, 'most difficult of all difficulties', 'nothing surpasses this difficulty' (Shinran 1997, Vol. 1: 344; Bloom 1965: 41). In another sense, however, it is not difficult, for one does not have to do anything. Self-abandonment can save because it is Other Power. That is, self-abandonment must be solely the action of Amitābha himself, shining (as it were) from within.

Shinran adopted a version of Shandao's characterization of serene trust, self-abandonment, as sincerity, trustfulness, and a desire for rebirth in the Pure Land – stressing not the acts these entailed but rather the attitudes (Bloom 1965: 38). Chief among these is the attitude of sincerity, and all three are gifts from Amitābha, Other Power working in us. Put a different way, self-abandonment is not a volitional belief in something, but an articulation of our Buddha-nature (Shinran 1997, Vol. 1: 97 ff.; Bloom 1965: 39 ff.). This is crucial, and places Shinran's thought squarely within the development of East Asian Buddhist theory. It is a point that is brought out very clearly by Taitetsu Unno (in Foard *et al.* 1996: 319–20):

> True entrusting [*shinjin*; self-abandonment] . . . is not some kind of reliance on an external agent, grasped objectively, but a non-dichotomous awareness of one's limited self which

> is one with unlimited life, the life of Amida. Although the Pure Land tradition speaks of 'other power,' it is not an 'other' in the ordinary sense. In the words of Saichi, an unlettered wooden sandal-maker, who left volumes of religious poetry written in simple vernacular, 'There is no self-power, there is no other-power; all is Other Power'.

We can become enlightened because we are already enlightened – as Dōgen said, only Buddhas become Buddhas. We cannot enlighten ourselves, for the ego cannot bring about egolessness. Only Other Power can help us. This is because within us all, at our very core, is Other Power itself, or the Buddha-nature which is Amitābha. It is Other Power beyond the ego of Own Power. And as the Buddha-nature it is in itself nonconceptual and hence beyond both object and subject.

What this amounts to is that we can become enlightened through self-abandonment. This is not possible if self-abandonment is Own Power. Therefore if it is possible at all self-abandonment must be (as it were) 'Other Power'. Only Other Power can save us. We can only have self-abandonment because self-abandonment is a shining forth of our innate Buddha-nature, which is Amitābha himself. All can be saved through self-abandonment, for all have the Buddha-nature, and all that is required is to stop striving and allow the Buddha-nature to radiate self-abandonment. The Buddha-nature is the Buddha, which is to say Amitābha himself, and we are saved solely through his shining forth – that is, his compassion. Self-abandonment, therefore, is in this sense the result of Amitābha's grace, for in no way can it be earned. For Shinran all transference of merit is from Amitābha to us and not from us to a rebirth in the Pure Land. Sentient beings themselves have no merit, they have nothing to transfer. If it were left to our Own Power then there would be no rebirth in the Pure Land, and no enlightenment at all (Bloom 1965: 49).

When self-abandonment (*shinjin*) arises, and the Buddha-nature shines, one is instantly assured of rebirth in the Pure Land. Rebirth in the Pure Land is settled. That is, the one who has completely abandoned all recourse to self attains thereby the advanced Bodhisattva stage of 'irreversibility' or 'nonretrogression'. One who recites the *nenbutsu* is hence on the same level as Maitreya (Shinran 1997, Vol. 1: 455; Unno, in Foard *et al.* 1996: 345). Thus salvation is achieved (Bloom 1965: 50–1, 59). The teaching of the Pure Land is thereby one of 'sudden enlightenment'. In this very life the moment self-abandonment arises we are definitely assured of enlightenment. Shinran states:

> We say that we abide in the rank of the company of the truly assured when we encounter the profound Vow of the gift of Amida's Other Power and our minds which rejoice at being given true faith [self-abandonment] are assured, and when, because we are accepted by him, we have the adamantine mind.
>
> (Bloom 1965: 61–2)

As a result of the arising of self-abandonment recitation of the name of Amitābha flows forth fervently in the *nenbutsu*. Nevertheless, it should be clear that this recitation does not earn salvation in any sense. In particular, there is no question of recitation at the time of

death being crucial in attaining the Pure Land. There is no need to keep reciting the *nenbutsu* as a strategy in case death intervenes, or to make elaborate preparations for the deathbed scene. The moment self-abandonment truly arises our rebirth is assured (Hirota 1982: 36–7). But self-abandonment cannot be *our own* act. Hence no act we do can possibly bring about our salvation. That would be a contradiction. Still, it is the case that self-abandonment happens to manifest itself in recitation of the name of Amitābha Buddha. This is 'a sign of praise and gratitude in which the devotee acknowledge[s] his great debt to Amida Buddha' for his salvific grace (Bloom 1965: 73). Gratitude, for Jōdo Shin Shū, thus becomes a way of life.[182] As Yui-en puts it:

> Whatever may occur, as far as birth is concerned, one should just recall constantly and unselfconsciously the depths of Amida's benevolence and one's gratitude for it, without any contriving. Then the nembutsu will emerge. This is the meaning of jinen. Jinen is none other than being free of all calculation. It is itself Other Power.[183]

The attaining of this state of irreversibility or nonretrogression is in itself, in a way, to attain the Pure Land. And at death, says Yui-en:

> When, by allowing ourselves to be carried on the ship of Amida's Vow, we have crossed this ocean of birth-and-death, so full of suffering, and attained the shore of the Pure Land, then the moon of awakening to things as they truly are will immediately appear, and becoming one with the unhindered light filling the ten quarters, we will benefit all sentient beings. At that moment we attain enlightenment.
>
> (Hirota 1982: 38)

It seems, therefore, that for Shinran just as Amitābha is finally not an external objective Buddha but rather is the Buddha-nature transcending all concepts of subject and object, so the Pure Land is effectively not some place where we go, eventually to become enlightened. Rather, by truly letting-go and coming to rely on Amida and his vows we attain complete irreversibility in life and are immediately enlightened at death. At death we become what as the Buddha-nature, Amitābha, we always were. Without this entrusting, self-abandonment, saṃsāra continues and there is rebirth in accordance with one's egoistic deeds. And enlightenment here clearly involves *prajñā*, wisdom, directly seeing the ultimate truth and understanding things the way they really are. From this position of enlightenment (Buddhahood) through compassion one 'descends', and operates always and everywhere for the benefit of sentient beings: '[O]ne can now work freely without any obstructions for the salvation of all beings' (Unno, in Foard *et al.* 1996: 341, 345–7). It is hence a recognizably Mahāyāna Buddhist form of enlightenment. Whereas in the other Pure Land schools the practitioner attains the Pure Land at death, and thereupon definite assurance of enlightenment, for Shinran definite assurance takes place in life at the occurrence of definitive self-abandonment. Whenever death takes place, the practitioner attains final enlightenment there and then. Thus the Pure Land as understood by Shinran is in the very last resort not a beautiful Buddha Field with trees, terraces, and pools, although it may be presented

in that attractive manner in order to help those who find such images more accessible. Rather, the Pure Land is finally Buddhahood itself, the *dharmakāya*, or the pure mind of the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa*. Through the complete letting-go, the egolessness, of the arising of self-abandonment, therefore, one can attain perfect Buddhahood for the benefit of all living beings.[184]

Shinran's system is all very well, but no doubt his opponents asked the same question of it as they had asked of his teacher Hōnen: 'Is it really Buddhism?'. Shinran makes it clear in his *Kyōgyōshinshō* that the motivation for seeking rebirth in the Pure Land is a desire to help sentient beings, and not pleasure, one's own happiness (Shinran 1997, Vol. 1: 167–70, esp. 168). This is the *bodhicitta*, and since *bodhicitta* is crucial to, and characteristic of, any notion of Mahāyāna this should be sufficient to class Jōdo Shin Shū as Mahāyāna in one of its many skilful guises. In addition, it is argued that self-abandonment is the result of complete egolessness, emptiness, and the Pure Land is in its highest expression another name for Buddhahood, the *dharmakāya* itself. As Taitetsu Unno puts it, for Shinran 'entrusting oneself to boundless compassion is tantamount to the profoundest realization in Buddhist awakening' (Foard *et al.* 1996: 345). Perhaps most of all, regardless of their own tradition, for any follower of Mahāyāna the Pure Land tradition should be judged by its effectiveness as a means of cutting greed, hatred and delusion, and generating their opposites, a means of 'ceasing to do evil and learning to do good'. Although the expression of Shinran's system in this context is certainly rather different from, say, Theravāda or the dGe lugs traditions, nevertheless in practice, as is borne out by the stories of the Pure Land saints (the *myōkōnin*), the Pure Land tradition has often been strikingly effective.[185] True, Shinran's Pure Land teaching disparages Own Power, although it sees a clash between Own Power and the not-Self doctrine and also a clash between Own Power and the nonconceptual subject and object transcending status of the Buddha-nature. Shinran's Pure Land teaching can thus on its own terms claim to be truer to the Buddhist wisdom teachings than other traditions. In fact, in the light of Buddhist doctrinal history any conception of Buddhism which would see exclusive use of Own Power as essential to Buddhism would have to rule out also most of Mahāyāna from Buddhism as well. Moreover, in its broad appeal to all classes of people Pure Land forms of Buddhism can claim to be closer to the spirit of the Mahāyāna teaching of universal liberation and compassion than most other more exclusive forms of Buddhism. As Shinran himself commented at the end of one of his works (Shinran 1997, Vol. 1: 469):

> That people of the countryside who do not know the meanings of written characters and who are painfully and hopelessly ignorant, may easily understand, I have repeated the same things over and over. The educated will probably find this writing peculiar and may ridicule it. But paying no heed to such criticisms, I write only that ignorant people may easily grasp the meaning.

Thus in terms of the two constituents of Buddhahood, wisdom and compassion, Shinran's Pure Land tradition can claim to be truer to Mahāyāna Buddhism than other traditions.

In the last analysis, of course, to define Buddhism in a way which would rule out Shinran's Jōdo Shin Shū would be to beg the question. Shinran's system is *de facto* Buddhism, for it calls itself Buddhism and can be traced back through a linear series of shifting ideas and influences to China and thence to India, and through the series to the Buddha himself. There is probably no clear-cut, unchanging core to Buddhist doctrine. Buddhism as a religion in history has no essence, although the truth – whatever it will finally turn out to be – remains forever. And that, dear reader, is where I think we came in.

Notes

Chapter 1 Introduction

1. For the different ways in which the Mahāyāna is great, see the quotation from the commentary to the *Abhidharmasamuccaya*, cited in Skilling (2004: 143). The sixth refers to 'greatness of attainment', that is, the Mahāyāna is great because of its goal, which is the greatest goal, that of Buddhahood. For the suggestion that *mahā* in *Mahāyāna* could be taken as referring here to 'the Great', i.e. Buddhahood, see Williams 2005a. Thus Mahāyāna would be in origin etymologically the 'Vehicle [which leads to] the Great', i.e. Buddhahood. But it is possible that in some early Mahāyāna sources the expression is not used specifically with reference to Buddhahood as a goal as such. In these cases it may be that the expression 'the Great' was used simply to indicate whatever the sūtra considered to be greater than its rivals, including the sūtra itself. If so, *Mahāyāna* might sometimes have been used simply to designate one's sūtra – one's own party – as 'the Greatest', i.e. *this* teaching, *these* views, *these* practices, are the greatest.
2. Cf. Walser 2005: 17 on 'Mahāyāna' as a 'brand name'.
3. I am using the terms 'sect' and 'school' here, following Silk 2002 (2005b repr.: 373–4). 'Sect' is a translation of *nikāya*, 'defined strictly speaking not by any doctrine but by adherence to a common set of monastic rules, a Vinaya. . . . The term "school," on the other hand, refers to the notion designated in Sanskrit by the word *vāda*. Schools are defined primarily by doctrinal characteristics, and are associations of those who hold to common teachings and follow the same intellectual methods, but they have no institutional existence. A Buddhist monk must belong to a sect, that is to say, he must have one, unique institutional identification determined by the liturgy according to which he was ordained.' Note that there are subsects of sects as well.
4. And indeed often in India in classical times, as the research of Gregory Schopen has shown (Schopen 2004a).
5. There has recently been some internet scholarly debate, influenced by a paper by Peter Skilling unpublished at the time of writing, on whether there ever was before modern times an idea of a more or less single Buddhist sect called 'Theravāda'. I am grateful to my colleague Rupert Gethin for alerting me to this discussion.

6. In speaking of Mahāyāna as a whole we are dealing with many centuries and extensive geographical dispersal. There was, e.g., an attempt in Japan to substitute a 'Mahāyāna Vinaya' for the Vinayas of the Mainstream Buddhist sects. This is particularly associated with the name of Saichō (767–822 CE), who sought to establish a monastic code based on the 58 Bodhisattva precepts of the *Fanwang Jing* ('Brahmā's Net Sūtra'), a sūtra composed probably in China in about the middle of the fifth century CE. Needless to say Saichō's contribution could not be the act responsible for a monastic 'schism' that created Mahāyāna. But it should remind us that the unity provided across the whole Buddhist world by the Vinaya(s) is only relative and often ideal. There were times, e.g., in Japanese Buddhism when breaches of the Vinaya were in practice common (Rambelli, in Payne and Tanaka 2004: 197, n. 21). As we shall see, there were also movements in East Asian 'Pure Land Buddhism' (again, particularly in Japan; see Chapter 10) that based themselves on the impossibility of seriously following Buddhist morality (whether or not there is value in trying) at least in this present decadent epoch.
7. Translated by Junjirō Takakusu, as quoted in Walser 2005: 41. Yijing writes as a follower of Mahāyāna. Hence he uses what is in fact a pejorative term 'Hīnayāna'. Whatever its East Asian associations with 'Small Vehicle', in Sanskrit, Pali and indeed in its Tibetan equivalent *Hīnayāna* means the 'Inferior Vehicle'. *Hīna* does not mean simply 'small'. In modern scholarly writing it is thus inappropriate as a neutral expression for those who do not adopt the Mahāyāna perspective. In what follows, in common with many modern scholars, I shall use 'Mainstream Buddhism', or sometimes *Śrāvakayāna*, to refer to non-Mahāyāna Buddhism.
8. On Pali *vetullavāda* = Sanskrit *vaipulyavāda* and its meaning, see, e.g., Walser 2005: 154–7. But Mahāyāna was certainly significantly present in Sri Lanka later than the time of king Vohārikatissa, although it was periodically put under pressure by later kings too (and suppressed finally by Parakkamabāhu I in favour of the distinctly anti-Mahāyāna Mahāvihāra sect (or subsect) of Theravāda in the latter half of the twelfth century). As far as we can tell Mahāyāna in Sri Lanka all but died out (but cf. Holt 1991 and Mori 1997). For a quick survey, with particular reference to the earlier period, see Bechert 1977. Bechert considers that the *Buddhāpadāna*, written in Pali in the first century or the beginning of the second century CE, was written by Theravāda Mahāyānists. This work managed to survive the early suppression of Mahāyāna because it succeeded in being included in the Pali Canon (note that the Pali canonical *Kathāvatthu* refutes several positions (on the ontology of *dhammas*, or the multiplicity of Buddhas) akin to those adopted by Mahāyānists). The famous disciple of Nāgārjuna, Āryadeva, is sometimes said to have come from Sri Lanka and hence might have been what would now be thought of as a Theravādin by ordination (i.e. the proper sense of 'Theravādin'). There is what appears to be an Indian commentary to the Mahāyāna *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* (*Lotus*) *Sūtra* surviving in Tibetan translation (from the Chinese) that describes itself in its colophon as written by a Singhalese teacher (*yul si ngga la'i slob dpon*) who may have been called Pṛthivībandhu (presumably this is the same as the *Fahualun* (*Fa-hua Lun*) known in Chinese,

and attributed to the Indian Buddhist philosopher Vasubandhu). If the author was actually Sri Lankan and based there he will almost certainly have been what we would nowadays think of as a Theravādin by Vinaya ordination (Bechert 1977: 363). On the basis of the Tibetan Tāranātha this teacher perhaps lived during the seventh or eighth century CE (on Indian commentaries to this sūtra cf. Nakamura 1980: 190–1). For four papers on Mahāyāna in Sri Lanka, see Mori 1999. Cf. also Deegalle 1999. For the private views of some monks in Sri Lanka, that might be thought not to be Theravāda doctrinal orthodoxy and indeed bear some similarity to Mahāyāna doctrine, including those of a particularly prominent monk Ānanda Maitreya who was influenced by ideas derived from Theosophy and astrology, see Gombrich and Obeyesekere 1988: esp. Ch. 9. This whole book is extremely stimulating for reflection on the origins of Mahāyāna ideas in a sectarian environment (here, Sri Lankan Theravāda) not in itself anything to do with or indeed sympathetic to Mahāyāna ideas.

9. Nattier 2003a: 195; italics original. She makes the same point in Nattier 2000: 94, with reference to the relatively early *Akṣobhyavyūha Sūtra*.
10. Ruegg 2004: 50; cf. too the suggestion, in Wayman and Wayman 1974: 3, of Mahāsāṃghika origins for the *Śrīmālādevīsiṃhanāda Sūtra*, which also shows the centrality of *tathāgatagarbha* teachings.
11. The asterisk in such cases is the standard way of referring to a hypothetical reconstruction of a Sanskrit title from its Chinese title, where a Sanskrit version no longer exists and perhaps never did exist. This is an enormous commentary on the *25,000 Verse Prajñāpāramitā* attributed, almost certainly incorrectly, to Nāgārjuna (second/third centuries CE) and extant only in Chinese (translated by Kumārajīva at the beginning of the fifth century CE). For the contemporary Chinese scholar Yinshun's arguments defending the traditional attribution to Nāgārjuna, see Xing 2005: 192–3.
12. Indeed the inscriptional evidence for Mahāyāna in Indian Buddhism may be even less than Schopen suggests. In common with some earlier Japanese scholars, Schopen holds that the expressions *śākyabhikṣu* and *paramopāsaka* came to be used in inscriptions with a uniquely Mahāyāna reference. Evidence that this was actually the case has been strongly criticized by Lance Cousins (2003). Daniel Boucher has recently speculated that in the transmission of Buddhism to China, too, the presence of Mahāyāna missionaries from Central Asia early in China, translating Mahāyāna sūtras, with little or no evidence for Mahāyāna at the time 'on the ground' in some of their Central Asian homelands either, suggests that they may have gone to China precisely *because* they found little support for their ideas in their homelands. This may also explain why early Chinese translations are predominantly of Mahāyāna sūtras. China may have been the haven Mahāyānists sought when they found little support in India and their Central Asian places of origin (a similar suggestion is made in passing in Nattier 2000: 79, n. 17). On the other hand by the fifth century CE we begin to find evidence for patronage of Mahāyāna in India and the first large translation of Mainstream Buddhist material into Chinese – a reversal of fortunes (Boucher 2006: 36; I am grateful to my

colleague John Kieschnick for drawing Boucher's article to my attention). This is all at the moment highly speculative, but it does suggest a valuable way of looking at the material and fruitful directions for future research. The picture we would then get is of early Mahāyānists leaving India, leaving Central Asia, carrying with them Mahāyāna sūtras either in written or memorized form, and finding their way to China where, for one reason or another, the environment was more sympathetic (why, compared with where they had come from, being the next interesting question – perhaps the magical power attributed to Mahāyāna sūtras may offer one clue. On the theme of thaumaturgic powers in the success of Buddhism in China and Japan, see Faure 1996: Ch. 3). In China they began the lengthy task of first translating, then eventually collating and assembling the collections of Mahāyāna sūtras. And it is in China that, in contrast with the situation in India, we have abundant material for the study of how Mahāyāna Buddhism operated 'on the ground'. The creation of further apocryphal Buddhist sūtras in China itself, and in Chinese (see Buswell 1990), begins to gain a context. Separating out 'genuine' Indian Mahāyāna sūtras from 'apocryphal' Chinese Mahāyāna sūtras becomes distinctly problematic. Note, incidentally, that we should not assume that because Mahāyāna sūtras found their way to China from India and Central Asia the reverse could not have occurred. It is perfectly possible for Mahāyāna sūtras to move from China into Central Asia and India, either translated at some point along the line from Chinese into, say, Sanskrit (cf. Nattier 1992), or written in Sanskrit (or indeed in a local language) in the Indic regions of Central Asia.

13. This is, though, only a relative moral unity. For examples of deliberate antinomianism or moral reversal in Japan, see the article by Rambelli on radical Pure Land cults in Payne and Tanaka 2004: Ch. 6.
14. Richard Gombrich has suggested that Aśoka came to the throne 136 years after the death of the Buddha, thus placing the death of the Buddha nearer 400 BCE. For further details of this debate, see Cousins 1996, reviewing Bechert 1991–2, and the Bechert volumes themselves.
15. On the importance of the Jātaka tales in suggesting to some people the way to go, as Bodhisattvas aiming for the very same Buddhahood that Śākyamuni attained, see Nattier 2003b: 181, 183.
16. See, e.g., Rahula 1966: 62, 1978: 76–7; Holt 1991: 59–60; Harrison 1987 (2005b repr.: 121–2; reference to the work of Melford Spiro). See also the article 'Theravāda' in Buswell 2004, which points out that Theravāda (lay?) manuscript copyists commonly vow to become Bodhisattvas or Buddhas. Again, what this might *mean*, apart from a pious wish for the future among those who clearly cannot aspire to become enlightened now, is unclear. Boucher (2006: 34), while accepting that the Central Asian material indicates Mahāyāna presence and possibly royal patronage in these localities at this time, comments on how atypical this is for most of Central Asian Buddhism (apart from Khotan) until significantly later. Cf. also occasional cases where kings claimed to be *Buddhas* (Strong 2002: 131–2).

17. The addition of a third period before the final disappearance of the Dharma, known as the 'final Dharma' (the 'Last Days'), where spiritual capacities are at a very low ebb, is not known in India, but is important in East Asian Buddhism. See Nattier (1991); cf. *mappō* below, Chapter 7.
18. Hence, perhaps, the importance of Mahākāśyapa in some of the relatively early Mahāyāna sūtras, such as the *Kāśyapaparivarta* or the *Ratnarāśi*.
19. See the Pali *Mahāpadesa Sutta*, and Lamotte 1983/4. Cf. summary and further references in Walser 2005: 107–12, and Harrison 2004.
20. The Sautrāntikas were recently the subject of s special edition of the *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* (Vol. 26, 2, 2003).
21. See, for example, Norman (1990–2001; 1993 vol.: 87) on the Sanskrit *bodhisattva*, compared with the Middle Indo-Āryan *bodhisatta*, an expression that should perhaps have been sanskritized not as *bodhisattva* but as *bodhisakta* = 'directed towards enlightenment', or perhaps *bodhiśakta* = 'capable of enlightenment'.
22. For a longer introduction to this topic, see Williams with Tribe 2000: 87–95, and Ch. 4.
23. The translation of *svabhāva* by 'intrinsic nature' (rather than, say, the more literal 'own-being' or 'self-existence') is urged in, e.g., Tillemans (2001). It is a particularly good translation in that it combines an appropriate level of philosophical precision while at the same time applying to both, e.g., Abhidharma and Mādhyamika uses and contexts. The notion of possessing a *svabhāva* (Pali: *sabhāva*), intrinsic nature, contrasted with merely conceptual existence, appears to be missing from the earliest Theravāda Abhidhamma literature, which may well have had far less concern with ontology than was later the case and is most familiar from the Sarvāstivāda. Note here, incidentally, that it would be misleading, as is often done, to translate *svabhāva* in the Abhidharma contexts as 'intrinsic' (or 'inherent') *existence*. Most *dharmas* in Abhidharma result from causes and conditions. As such, they are not held to *exist* intrinsically, or inherently. The understanding of *svabhāva* as entailing intrinsic or inherent existence is a Mādhyamika argument (see Chapter 3 below), and is as such part of the Mādhyamika *critique* of the coherence of a *dharma*'s possessing *svabhāva*.
24. Dating of sūtras is always fiendishly difficult. The *Lokānuvartanā Sūtra* was translated into Chinese during the second century CE, which places it among the very earliest Buddhist sūtras to be translated into Chinese. There is no particular reason to think that it was directly influenced by Mahāyāna.
25. Lance Cousins has suggested to me in a private note an alternative view that the Sthaviravādins may have been the innovators, in introducing new and stricter rules.
26. This may, however, be simply a folk etymology (Cousins 1991: 35).
27. On the Mahāsāṃghikas, and early divisions within Buddhism, see also Nattier and Prebish 1977.
28. Cf. here the use of the name 'Judas' for someone considered a betrayer.
29. Although A. K. Warder (1970: 216) has suggested that the views of Mahādeva seem little different from the position on the Arhat found in the Pali Canon. Cf. too Cousins

1991: 37, who sees all this as really reflecting debates within the schools about whether an Arhat can fall away or not, rather than a devaluing of the Arhat as such against a Buddha.

30. A number of sources make reference to a *bodhisattvapiṭaka*, which may refer to a 'scriptural collection (*piṭaka*) concerning the Bodhisattva'. It could initially have been a collection involving in some way jātaka or jātaka-type tales. If so, while it may initially have been a *descriptive* collection including stories of the previous births of Śākyamuni and perhaps other Buddhas, it may with time have been taken as a *prescriptive* collection involving stories illustrating the conduct expected of anyone who sets out on the path of a Bodhisattva towards Buddhahood, and further material could have been added on that conduct and its stages. The *bodhisattvapiṭaka* appears to have formed a separate part of the Dharmaguptaka (and just possibly Bahuśrutīya) Canon (cf. Walser 2005: 52–3), and its reference to a monk who might be a *bodhisattvapiṭaka*-holder is one of the main reasons suggesting a Dharmaguptaka provenance for the *Ugraparipṛcchā Sūtra* (Nattier 2003a: 80–1). There is also a relatively early (late second century CE?) Mahāyāna sūtra known as the *Bodhisattvapiṭaka*, which now forms part of the *Mahāratnakūṭa* collection, although what its connection is with the above 'scriptural collection (*piṭaka*) concerning the Bodhisattva' is not totally clear. See Pagel 1995, esp. 7–36.
31. Nevertheless, the Buddha was still originally a human being. And this is not as such a case of deification, for gods in Buddhism are as much subject to death, suffering, and rebirth as other unenlightened sentient beings.
32. Although note that the Buddha is not said in these Lokottaravāda sources actually to be an illusory being himself, some sort of a fiction or 'phantom', with the implication that *really* the Buddha was elsewhere, on another plane. That idea does eventually develop, but in specifically Mahāyāna contexts and not here.
33. On the role of the laity in Theravāda, see Gombrich 1988: 118 ff.
34. There are now a number of works that address critically Hirakawa's thesis. For a detailed critique by a Japanese scholar, see Sasaki 1997. Cf. also Sasaki (1999: 189–90; 193–4); this article is a critical review of a lengthy work in Japanese (1997) by Masahiro Shimoda on the Mahāyāna *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra*, a work that also tries to reconstruct the origins of the Mahāyāna with very different results to those of Hirakawa. Shimoda is particularly critical of Hirakawa's treatment of stūpas and stūpa worship. He apparently sees the quest for a 'living Buddha' experienced internally (through the sort of meditation practised by, e.g., forest meditators?), in conscious opposition to worship of Buddha relics in stūpas, as an important factor in the origins of the Mahāyāna (Sasaki 1999: 195). But one could suggest that perhaps the extent of interest of Japanese scholars in stūpa worship, one way or another, in the origins of the Mahāyāna is excessive. For further examples of criticisms of Hirakawa, see Schopen (2005: Ch. 2), Walser (2005: Ch. 1), Silk 2002 (2005b repr.: 380 ff.), and Nattier (2003a: 89–93). For a relatively recent sympathetic restatement of Hirakawa's lay thesis, though, see Vetter (1994), who wants to see a significant lay involvement in proto-Mahāyāna; cf. Vetter 2001 (unseen).

35. Cf. Nattier 2003a: 274, n. 430. Another identifiable group that may have played an important role in the inception of the Mahāyāna, according to Masahiro Shimoda, was that of the *dharmakathikas*, the 'Dharma Masters', who explicitly rejected the worship of stūpas (see Sasaki 1999: 192–3). Sasaki, in his review of Shimoda's work, considers a number of his claims regarding the *dharmakathikas* and their attitude to stūpas still to lack sufficient proof.
36. Daniel Boucher (1991) has shown how, from at least quite early in the Common Era, Buddhists started inscribing a formula for dependent origination (*pratītyasamupāda*) on, e.g., relic caskets, or (perhaps later) stamping it on, e.g., clay tablets, and placing them inside stūpas effectively as substitutes for the relics of the Buddha, as if the text that is considered to be the essence of the Dharma is worthy of the very same offerings and treatment as the Buddha himself. The text comes to sacralize the stūpa; it is the presence of the text that makes the spot sacred. It is said to be the Dharma-body (*dharmakāya*) of the Buddha, and like relics it literally embodies his presence. However, note that Schopen has recently expressed reservations about the 'book cults' of early Mahāyāna (Schopen 2004b: 497–8). That they occurred he still accepts, but he is doubtful that this was remotely the intention of the originators of the Mahāyāna sūtras. They were not interested simply in substituting for one cult, that of stūpas, another, the cult of the book. Their original intention was a conservative and revivalist one of shifting attention from cult back to doctrine, the *content* of the books: 'That in this attempt the book itself was . . . fetishized may only be a testament to the strong pressures toward cult and ritual that seem to have been in force in Indian Buddhism from the beginning' (*ibid.*: 497). For her part Nattier has pointed out that at least one important early Mahāyāna sūtra, the *Ugraparipṛcchā Sūtra*, knows nothing of any 'book cult' (Nattier 2003a: 184–6). The situation in India appears to have been varied and complex, as Schopen himself now recognizes (Schopen 2005: 153, n. 118). On Chinese uses of sūtra texts from late third to seventh centuries CE, see Campany 1991. These uses include recitation or chanting to bring relief from drought, funeral recitations for the dead, displaying the sūtra text as a sacred object (the sūtra as a commodity), use as an amulet, and the suggestion that the sūtra text itself somehow embodies the Buddha, or the power of the Buddha, and can perform miracles, or bring harm to those who desecrate it.
37. Note, however, that there may be some problem knowing what inscriptions *are* recognizably Mahāyāna in type. As I have pointed out already, Schopen's association with Mahāyāna of the expressions *śākyabhikṣu* and *paramopāsaka* or their female equivalents in inscriptions has been strongly criticized by Lance Cousins (2003).
38. Of course, I am not saying (as Vetter 1994: 1262, n. 37 seems to think), that laymen globally *never* take initiatives in religious affairs. No doubt elsewhere laity initiated religious change (St Catherine of Siena, for example), and even elsewhere in Buddhism (such as Shinran in Japan, after he had left the monastic state). Even in the case of India I see Brahmins (who are not themselves as such monks) initiating change in religion (many great 'Hindu' Naiyāyikas, for example, were village Brahmins). But I do not think

in India Brahmins (let alone other laity) *qua* lay Brahmins would have been accepted as initiators *in Buddhism*, and we have no evidence (which is not the same as imaginative reconstructions) that such laymen did initiate lasting change in Buddhism in India, and certainly not in the final centuries BCE and early centuries CE. Had they attempted to do so, we would have much clearer evidence and, I suspect, howls of 'orthodox' protest that would include not just statements about how the Mahāyāna sūtras had been fabricated but also disparaging remarks about the lay status of their fabricators too. Moreover nowhere do any of those who set out to defend the validity of the Mahāyāna sūtras also address criticisms based on accusations that they were not just fabricated but fabricated *by laity*. Throughout Indian Buddhism we repeatedly find the function of laity to provide gift donations to the Saṃgha, not to urge new sūtras and doctrines on the monastic order.

39. See Harrison 1978: 57; trans. in Harrison 1990: 96 ff. Cf. the *Bodhisattvagocaropāyaviṣayavikurvaṇanirdeśa Sūtra* (oldest Chinese translation fifth century CE). At the end, the Buddha predicts that this sūtra will reappear 100 years after his death, during the reign (it is said) of king Aśoka. The sūtra will be found enclosed in caskets containing the Buddha's relics. Unfortunately at that time people will not have faith in it. But after a further 50 years people will be practising the Mahāyāna and hence will believe in and respect the sūtra (Zimmermann 1999: 179–81). One should be cautious, incidentally, about taking this as an actual historical reference to the recovery in relatively early times of hidden Mahāyāna sūtras (or *a* sūtra) from inside stūpas. Much more likely it is an oblique way of indicating the status of this Mahāyāna sūtra and its (literal) closeness to the body of the Buddha. As Schopen has pointed out, at least some Mahāyāna sūtras put themselves forward as objects of worship (as the Dharma-body of the Buddha), on the model of the Buddha's relics.
40. I am influenced here by Schopen's concept of 'generalization' (Schopen 2005: 208–9).
41. Harrison (1995: 67) has suggested that sūtras that offer difficult fruits of the monastic (particularly meditative) life such as the supernormal faculties (*abhijñās*) to serious lay practitioners with relative ease may also be read as reaching out to the laity for support.
42. On the ambivalent position of Theravāda monks as renunciates and society's leaders in Sri Lanka, see Gombrich (1988). In Brāhmanical political theory the principal function of the king is precisely to protect.
43. Few if any ancient Mahāyāna scriptures or scripture-fragments have been found on (in modern terms) Indian soil itself, although in Nepal they have been regularly copied down the centuries and more and more fragments are emerging from Pakistan, Afghanistan and Central Asia. This may again suggest the relative unpopularity of Mahāyāna in India proper (or, as Paul Harrison has pointed out to me in a private note, that climatic conditions in the Ganges Valley/Deccan are not exactly ideal for the survival of manuscripts). Given the number of Mahāyāna sūtras important to East Asian Buddhism which were probably composed in Central Asia and China, it is just possible that the real popularization of Mahāyāna was a phenomenon which took place outside the Indian

subcontinent for reasons connected, perhaps, with the transmission and attraction of Buddhism to other cultures. That the popularity and particular form of Mahāyāna in China may have led to misunderstandings concerning Mahāyāna as it was in India itself is shown in detail by Schopen (2005: Ch. 1).

44. Cf. also the stories in Strong (2002: 107–8; 122) in which, when requested, Māra and a nāga king use their magical powers in order to appear like the Buddha so that someone born after the Buddha's time can see what he looked like – his wonderful attributes – and worship him. Clearly the wish to *see* the Buddha (to have *darśana* of him) was important. As we shall see, visionary means of doing so may well have been so too.
45. Note the importance and significance here of a present Buddha *predicting* a or the Bodhisattvas' future Buddhahood. Such a prediction is obviously difficult after the death of Śākyamuni Buddha, if after death a Buddha has gone beyond all recall. Hence the importance of there being Buddhas still around, elsewhere in the infinite universe, and the imperative for Bodhisattvas to gain access to them.
46. See this chapter below; and also further material in Chapter 10. One scholar of Japanese Buddhism has gone so far as to argue that, 'Mahāyāna Buddhism is, among many things it can be, a tradition of the mind's faculty for producing images in both waking life and sleep: a tradition, that is, of fantasy producing visions, which commentaries try to explain to further cognitive understanding, and dreams, which were interpreted by the dreamers for their own meanings and which can be, to add a modern aspect, read by us for their feelings. It will be possible to gain a better understanding of Mahāyāna Buddhism as a vehicle not only of ideas and institutions but of human emotion as well only when studies of the fantastic end of the spectrum become more available. Once we recognize the importance of fantasy on the level of sutras and commentaries, we will find in it a common ground shared by the beliefs and practices of ordinary people, and the often held distinction between the great and little traditions, and philosophical and folk Buddhisms will collapse. Buddhist philosophers try to rationalize visions; common folk use them. Also important are studies of rituals, which stand midway between the accounts of visions and doctrines and form a part of the common ground shared by leaders and followers' (Tanabe 1992: 13–14).
47. Ray has argued that the forest hermit tradition was non-monastic in origin, independent of the monasteries, and was initially antagonistic towards Buddhist monasticism (1994: 407). Only gradually did it become monasticized. These forest hermits were the *bodhisattvas* of the texts, contrasted with the monastic *bhikṣus*. The latter, Ray holds, are seen as obsessed with scholarship, philosophy, monastic rules and so on, and not seriously interested in meditation and enlightenment. But, as Walser (2005: 23–4) indicates, this rigid dichotomy fails to fit the texts as we now have them; '[M]any Mahāyāna *sūtras* seem to be perfectly comfortable with settled monastic life.' Walser points out that the *Ratnarāśi Sūtra* has both Mahāyāna well established in the monasteries and also forest hermit monks holding positions in the monastery itself. The *Ratnarāśi Sūtra* is plausibly early, inasmuch as we can tell which Mahāyāna sūtras are really early since it

is probably true that all the texts as we now have them date from no earlier than the middle period of the development of Mahāyāna. For further criticisms of Ray's hypothesis, particularly with reference to the *Ugraparipṛcchā Sūtra*, see Nattier (2003a: 93–6; she suggests that Ray's polarized opposition between meditators and monks may reflect Ray's own background in Chögyam Trungpa's tradition of Tibetan Buddhism). See also Harrison 2003: 129–30, n. 24.

48. Note that while these might provide us with some of the very earliest extant Mahāyāna sūtra sources, there is no suggestion that these texts themselves represent as such the very earliest phases of Mahāyāna. It is clear from their contents that Mahāyāna had already developed beyond its earliest or proto-Mahāyāna phase.
49. Although it is not clear how far Schopen's picture of such antagonism would fit all early Mahāyāna sūtras. It does not seem to be the case in the *Ugraparipṛcchā Sūtra*, for example. Arguably Schopen's picture is too polarized.
50. One could also refer here to the *Maitreyasiṃhanāda Sūtra*, which is the subject of an interesting paper by Schopen (2005: Ch. 3). For more important sūtra material on the *dhūtaguṇa* monks, see also, e.g., the *Ratnarāśi Sūtra* (Silk 1994: 338 ff.).
51. Note here Nattier's suggestion – made with reference to jātaka tales read either descriptively concerning Śākyamuni's previous lives, or prescriptively as recommendations for one's own Bodhisattva conduct – that the same text could be Mahāyāna or non-Mahāyāna depending on how it was used (Nattier 2003a: 186).
52. Cf. here the fifth/sixth-century *Ālokamālā* of Kambala (Lindtner 1985: 134–5), which is also clear that only those devoted to the Mahāyāna are [true] Buddhists. Others, even though they may be 'of our own side', have strayed from the path and are heading for hell. For another treatise in defence of the Mahāyāna, surviving in Chinese and dating from late fourth or early fifth century, that makes the same point, see the *Entering into the Great Vehicle* of someone whose Indian name has been reconstructed as Sāramati (trans R. M. Davidson in Lopez 1995b: 406).
53. The Jātakas and Avadānas, recounting often entertaining and frequently miraculous stories of the Buddha's previous births on his long Bodhisattva path to Buddhahood, were among the most popular and important of Buddhist literary products, as much appreciated in monastic contexts as among the wider lay populace. Scholars are beginning to understand more and more how grasping their centrality in so many Mahāyāna sūtras may well be important to understanding what is going on in early Mahāyāna. See Schopen (2004b: 495), who contrasts the popularity and attractiveness of this type of 'Mainstream Buddhist' material with the 'narrowly scholastic' nature and very restricted readership of much of the Mahāyāna sūtra literature, such as the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā* (8,000-verse) *Perfection of Wisdom Sūtra*. Perhaps these jātaka stories in Mahāyāna sūtras may have sometimes (among other purposes) formed a basis for more popular Mahāyāna preaching or admonishment. On jātaka-type stories in Mahāyāna sūtras, see Nattier 2003a: 144–5.
54. On this sūtra, and its textual history, see Boucher 2001. Boucher takes the verses above referring to the teacher and his old master who deny the authenticity of the sūtra as

inserted into the text by a later (Mahāyāna) editor or compiler concerning his very own teacher. For comments suggesting that Ensink's translation is not totally reliable see, *ibid.*: 93, n. 2 (cf. also the comments in the review of Ensink and other related pieces in de Jong 1979: 407–27). At the time of writing (2007) a translation and study of this sūtra by Boucher is listed as forthcoming with the University of Hawai'i Press under the title *Bodhisattvas of the Forest and the Formation of the Mahāyāna*.

55. And it is interesting in such a context to see the sūtra using the common Mahāyāna assertion that all is like an illusion and should be abandoned (*ibid.*). It shows a clear polemical framework of monastic rivalry against their detractors, and perhaps mutual exhortation among Bodhisattvas themselves, behind what might otherwise be thought to be a purely philosophical ontological position. A similar point, perhaps, is made by Jan Nattier (2003a: 135–6, n. 62) when she observes that in the oldest portions of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā* and *Vajracchedikā* Perfection of Wisdom sūtras the negations are not of all *dharmas* (and hence all things) as such but rather directed at the Bodhisattva and the practices in which he is engaged. She adds that '[i]t is my strong suspicion that this "rhetoric of negation" first emerged as a tactical attempt to undercut the potential for bodhisattvas' arrogance, and was only later generalized to what came to be considered a new (anti-abhidharma) ontology'. It is possible too that the dreamlike nature of reality found mentioned frequently in Mahāyāna sūtras reflects sometimes the intensive meditation practices and asceticism of forest hermits.
56. Silk 1994: 163–4. Recall here the suppression of *vetullavāda*, usually taken as meaning Mahāyāna, by king Vohārikatissa in Sri Lanka. Note the importance of appealing to the secular arm to 'clean up the *saṃgha*', something that both sides were clearly very willing to do. Kings cleaning up the *saṃgha* is a Buddhist tradition that goes back at least as far as Aśoka. Both sides expected the laity, especially powerful laity like kings, to see their own *saṃgha* as the true, virtuous, inheritors of Śākyamuni and the others as in some way disastrously destructive of the Dharma, and hence not worthy recipients of lay donations. Note also the importance for Mahāyāna in this context of the possibility of kings declaring themselves, or being declared by others, Bodhisattvas.
57. A point which suggests, incidentally, if nothing else did, that *pace* Ray the renunciant Bodhisattvas must themselves be monks.
58. Schopen 2004a: Ch. 7, esp. p. 211. For a Vinaya reference to a monk sending a slave-woman to buy something in the market, and giving her money for the purpose, see Durt 1998 (2005b repr.: 122). But forest hermitages too might possess property and slaves. See the *Sūryagarbha Sūtra* in Silk 1994: 164–5. This particular sūtra may have originated in Central Asia (*ibid.*: 169). That forest monks too could be relatively comfortable and prosperous is shown in Schopen 2004a: 93. Locke (1989, 2005b repr.: 287) expresses some surprise that in Nepal in the tenth century those referred to as Buddhist monks were apparently buying and selling land in their own name: 'This would seem to indicate a high degree of secularization'. His surprise is clearly misplaced, and perhaps it is his assumption of what is involved in Buddhist monasticism, and its 'secularization',

that needs reconsidering. Locke also notes that at more or less the same time the great Buddhist missionary to Tibet, Atiśa commented on the excellent discipline and study at one of the Buddhist monasteries (*vihāras*) in Kathmandu.

59. See Schopen 2004a: Ch. 1, esp. p. 15. That large monasteries were not likely to be suitable places for meditation can be seen in Buddhaghosa's *Visuddhimagga*. See Deleanu 2000 (2005b repr.: 45–6).
60. On the near-universality of this expression for the Bodhisattva's activity in Mahāyāna, see Jenkins 1999: 84 ff.
61. For the considerable importance of this sūtra in the history of Mahāyāna, and its relative neglect until recently in modern scholarship, see Nattier 2003a: Ch. 1.
62. Note here the use of meditation on universal loving kindness as a strategy for eliminating particular emotional attachment to specific individual family members.
63. *Ibid.*: 265–6; cf. too the almost complete dismissal of the idea of a lay Bodhisattva in the relatively early *Bodhisattvapiṭaka* (Pagel 1995: 322–3).
64. Note, however, that work by Boucher (2001) on Dharmarakṣa's early (third century CE) Chinese translation of the *Rāṣṭrapālaparipṛcchā* suggests the possibility that the earlier version of this sūtra may have been rather less bitterly condemnatory of the 'wicked' monks than later versions reflected in, e.g., the extant Sanskrit and Tibetan texts. If the earlier version(s) of the sūtra were less condemnatory then that suggests that some forest monks became more disgusted at the worldly and hypocritical direction the main Buddhist monasteries were taking as time passed. Dharmarakṣa's version of the *Rāṣṭrapālaparipṛcchā* also seems to lack many of the verses in this sūtra praising the Buddha, and references to the jātaka-type stories (cf. Nattier 2003a: 144–5, n. 17).
65. See here Nattier's discussion (2003a: 132–5; 144–7). She points out with reference to Śāntideva's *Bodhicaryāvatāra* (1960: 5: 10), one of the most important treatises on the path of the Bodhisattva, that the perfection of giving, for example, 'is simply "the mental attitude itself" of relinquishing all that one has to others, and does not require the actual giving of physical objects' (Nattier 2003a: 145, n. 18). However Harrison 2003: 132 suggests that in reality complete isolation among forest hermits is likely to have been rare, and they probably tended to congregate in groups. This is certainly supported by the *Sarvadharmāpravṛttinirdeśa Sūtra* that we shall look at next. Harrison also points out that the actual 'forest' or 'wilderness' may not have been that far in distance from the monastery or village. As time passed, so it may have become more a symbol, or perhaps even a state of mind, than a physical actuality. In some circles this may have happened fairly early, since we find the forest/wilderness as a state of mind in the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Sūtra* (Conze 1973a: 233).
66. On the very late stage at which the solitary wandering or secluded hermit Bodhisattva finally returns to the world and 'resumes his duties towards humankind' (he is only one birth away from Buddhahood) in the relatively early *Bodhisattvapiṭaka*, see Pagel 1995: 325–6. The association of forest hermit monks with preaching to the laity nevertheless should not be overlooked. We can assume that they were indeed involved sometimes

with such preaching, even if not yet 'perfect', if only because that would have been expected by lay supporters, and it is unlikely that many, possibly most, forest hermits really could have survived without lay support. The *Ratnarāśi Sūtra* (Silk 1994: 346) refers to forest hermit monks coming into a village or town in search of alms. And the *Ugraparipṛcchā Sūtra* itself lists other occasions too when a forest hermit might come into a village (Nattier 2003a: 290, 294–5, 307 ff.). Moreover, the production of written texts – the Mahāyāna sūtras – seems to have gone on apace among forest hermits, and this also is a form of preaching (Harrison 2003: 131–2). We certainly should not think that because they were forest hermits they spent all their time meditating and had nothing to do with study or indeed literary production. Quite the reverse. This is one reason why the opposition between forest hermit monks and village monks, or monks in closer contact with villages, towns, and laity, is not exactly the same as the well-known opposition familiar notably from Pali commentarial sources, between study/preaching monks (those who bear 'the burden of the books' (*ganthadhura*)) and meditation monks (those who bear the 'burden of insight meditation' (*vipassanādhura*)), even though the latter often were forest hermit monks. Nevertheless, the fact that there is a tradition of a debate in the first century BCE that consciously decided in favour of promoting the former over the latter *because of its relevance to the interests and welfare of the laity*, and hence to the survival of Buddhism, should be borne in mind in considering possible contexts for the rise of Mahāyāna. Note also, e.g., interesting discussions in contemporary Sri Lankan (Theravāda) Buddhism about the importance of monks ministering to the needs of the laity, and the connection of this with the revitalization and hence the survival of the Dharma. Ministering to the needs of the laity is referred to here as 'social service', but is understood in terms of the laity's religious and spiritual needs, particularly through the performance of rituals. See the interesting paper by Jeffrey Samuels (2003), who perhaps does not fully bring out the antiquity and centrality of all of this (particularly the ritual dimension) within Indian Buddhism. It may very well also have had something to do with, e.g., the eventual rise of Buddhist tantric ritualism.

67. But the *Maitreyasiṃhanāda Sūtra*, which may be quite an early Mahāyāna sūtra, already has one group of Bodhisattvas criticizing another group, as 'sham' Bodhisattvas, interested in this case only in relics as a means of making a living (Schopen 2005: Ch. 3, esp. 67; cf. *ibid.*: 120 ff.). Criticism by one group of Mahāyānists of other groups that do not share their own teachings and orientation may well have started quite early. As a religious phenomenon based on meditating forest hermits, charismatic individuals, inner experience, dreams, mystically revealed and copied scriptures and so on, the Mahāyāna from the beginning may have been inherently fissiparous, prone to diversity, divergence, and quarrelling. This is no doubt one aspect of Silk's plurality of Mahāyānas, the problem we have seen already in defining Mahāyāna.

68. Later in the sūtra too there is another tale in which a forest hermit is similarly portrayed as holding wrong ideas and accusing others. Again, he goes to hell while the accused becomes the Buddha in a later life (Braarvig 2000: 84–5; Karashima 2001: 160). It could

be dangerous to leave the forest and preach in the town, though. In the *Samādhirāja Sūtra* we read of a forest hermit monk who enters a town in order to preach and hence arouses the jealousy of a king, who has him tortured and executed. In this jātaka-type story the Buddha declares, unexpectedly, that at that time he was the evil but remorseful king (Braarvig 2002: 157–8). So is this particular sūtra really in favour of the monk leaving the forest or not?

69. That not all Mahāyāna sūtras originated among forest hermits with a distinct animosity towards large property-owning monasteries (even if perhaps the earliest Mahāyāna sūtras did) can be seen from those Mahāyāna sūtras that fulminate against kings and ministers for despoiling wealthy monasteries of their property and punishing monks for offences, even where the monks are genuinely guilty of serious crimes. See Harrison (forthcoming).
70. For a short Mahāyāna defence of itself, dating from the late fourth or early fifth centuries CE, see, e.g., Sāramati's *Entering into the Great Vehicle* (trans. R. M. Davidson in Lopez 1995b).
71. MacQueen 2005a: 318; 1981: 309; cf. Lopez 1995a: 43, esp. n. 7.
72. Harrison 1990: 33; cf. Harrison 1978: 43; 2005b repr.: 92. See Chapter 10 below, which includes reference to a Chinese account of new teachings actually being received from Amitāyus by someone in a vision during a *pratyutpanna* retreat and transmitted to humankind. What happened in China is likely to have happened in India too.
73. This is from a surviving Sanskrit fragment of the *Pratyutpanna Sūtra*. See Harrison 1978: 54; 2005b repr.: 104.
74. The notion of the Buddha still being available, while I think important in the rise and development of Mahāyāna, is not so remote from Mainstream Buddhist practice (as opposed, perhaps, to doctrine) as it may appear. Gregory Schopen has shown extensive evidence for widespread belief from the early centuries of Buddhism that the Buddha was somehow still present in his stūpa relics (see, for example, Schopen 1997: Chs 7, 12; Schopen 2004a: Ch. 10). John Strong (2002: 116–17) refers to cases known in, e.g., the Theravāda tradition, where the Buddha's relics miraculously 'come alive' and embody the presence of the Buddha once more.
75. A further interesting discussion of meditation practices and the early Mahāyānists, particularly associated with the *Perfection of Wisdom* sūtras, can be found in Deleanu (2000).
76. This suggests a possible connection in terms of meditation practice with the later tantric practices associated with the meditative construction of the *maṇḍala* of a deity. In a recent paper Rupert Gethin (2006) has argued that meditative visualization of alternative realms in Buddhism may have been more common in Mainstream Buddhism too, even prior to the rise of Mahāyāna, than has previously been realized. For a good first survey of tantric doctrine in India, see Tribe, in Williams with Tribe 2000: Ch. 7.
77. The obvious connection with the much later Tibetan tradition of 'hidden treasures' (*gter ma*) is pointed out by Harrison. Note also the centrality of the impact of *writing* in all of this.

78. In a jātaka-type tale in the *Rāṣṭrapālaparipṛcchā* deities admonish the hero at midnight (Ensink 1952: 35–6, 42, 44 ff., 56). Once again, as Harrison points out (2003: 135), we find a much later Tibetan version of something that may have some similarities with this – the so-called 'Dream Yoga' known most famously from the 'Six Yogas of Nāro pa'. For a short treatment of dreams in Buddhism, including an interesting classification of different types of dreams from the *Vibhāsā*, which dates from about the middle Mahāyāna (*c.* second century CE), see Mayer 2004. On dreams and their importance among modern forest hermit monks in Sri Lanka, including cases of what was held to be visitations and teaching by deities, see Carrithers 1983: 86–9, 182–3, 185 ff. One of the most extensive discussions of dreams in Mahāyāna Buddhism is Tanabe 1992, a fascinating study of the life and particularly the visions and dreams, based on his dream diary, of the distinguished Japanese monk Myōe Shōnin (1173–1232; see Chapter 10 below). Myōe certainly lived in an astonishing visionary world. He actively sought visions and significant dreams, and his spiritual life and understanding of the Mahāyāna path was intimately bound up with them. Not surprisingly, Myōe's doctrinal ontological understanding was based on the fluidity of the concept of 'reality', its lack of fundamental distinction from the worlds of dreams and visionary experience.
79. In an influential work Brian Stock (1983: esp. Ch. 2) has spoken of medieval European 'textual communities', made possible in some way by the move from primarily oral religiosity to the use of written sources. These textual communities (therefore reflecting changes in education levels and literacy) may be products of and can sometimes stimulate and perpetuate heterodoxy. Characteristically they were centred on charismatic individuals (the guardians of the book and teachers of the textual community) who experienced visions and visionary dreams, which could be sources of heresies. In cross-cultural terms there may be some interest in seeing Mahāyāna as a set of highly successful Buddhist 'heresies'. The similarities between Buddhism and medieval Christianity in Europe here – and the differences, notably in the way in which Mahāyāna 'heresies' in Buddhism eventually flourished rather than being suppressed – might repay further research.
80. This occurs in both the *Cullavagga* of the Vinaya and also in the *Aṅguttara Nikāya*. It is quoted in, e.g., Nattier (1992: 218–19).
81. According to the Sanskrit versions it should also not contradict the nature of things (*dharmatā*; see Lamotte 1983/4: 9 ff.; 2005b repr.: 194 ff.).
82. For evidence of this process actually occurring, see Nattier 2003a: 11–13, n. 3.

Chapter 2 The *Perfection of Wisdom (Prajñāpāramitā) Sūtras*

1. In Nepal, for example the Mahāyāna sūtras are still used in this celebratory and worshipful manner. See, e.g., Lewis (2000: 16). Introducing Lewis's book, and indicating the way in which Newar Buddhism in Nepal continues to the present day ritual activities focused on the book in just the manner recommended in, e.g., the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā*

(8,000-verse) *Perfection of Wisdom Sūtra*, Schopen comments of the Nepalese (Lewis 2000: ix): '[S]ome, but very few, read them, too; most however, recited or had them recited (and recitation is not at all the same thing as our "reading"), copied or had them copied when their mother died, worshipped them with aromatic powders, unguents, and pastes, or carried or saw them carried in procession. Such behavior implies a very different conception of the nature and function of sacred texts in a culture other than our own . . .'. Buddhism came to the area now known as Nepal very early indeed (almost certainly during the lifetime of the Buddha), and it is the only area of the Indian Buddhist world with a continuous Buddhist tradition, dominated for at least a millennium by forms of Mahāyāna. Although this book is on Mahāyāna doctrine, it is important to remember that, in general, day to day Mahāyāna practice in India was/is not a matter of deep philosophy, or even meditation. Research on living Mahāyāna Buddhism in Nepal by scholars such as Todd T. Lewis, John Locke and David Gellner has drawn our attention to the absolute centrality in Buddhist practice – in this case Mahāyāna practice – of *ritual*, in particular ritual power and making merit. What did most Buddhist monks – including monks with a Mahāyāna orientation – actually *do* in ancient India (for an interesting paper on what we know of some of this from the archaeology of the Ajaṇṭā cave monasteries, see Cohen 1998)? As we have seen, some engaged in the activities of forest hermits. But all were involved one way or another in rituals, rituals considered to have power to bring about desired results, for patrons (i.e. for the benefit of others, often but by no means exclusively lay) but also for themselves (that this intense involvement in – particularly funeral – rituals in a Mahāyāna context is still the same in, e.g., contemporary Japanese Buddhism, see Swanson 1993: 140). And the more the person or group performing the ritual was considered to possess power (through, e.g., meditation, or particularly efficacious scriptures, mantras etc.) to ensure ritual efficacy, the more in demand their powers would be and the more they would (perhaps in a spiritual but certainly in a socio-economic sense) prosper in the highly competitive spiritual market-place of ancient India. Forest hermits, with the power that accrued through their practices, were (or could be) very intensively involved in ritual activities. It is within this context that we must understand the subsequent rise of specifically 'tantric' Buddhism, and the eventual conclusion that not just rain, good crops and freedom from snakes, but even Buddhahood itself, could be obtained through magical ritual means (including the internalized rituals of late Indian Vajrayāna Buddhism). For a good introductory survey of tantric Buddhism in India, see Tribe, in Williams with Tribe 2000: Ch. 7. For a detailed study of the centrality of ritual in Mahāyāna Buddhism in contemporary Ladakh, see Mills 2003. On the presence of spells and *dhāraṇīs* in Chinese Buddhism from quite early times, as an integral part of Chinese Mahāyāna (and therefore not in themselves a sign of any peculiar separate 'tantric' or 'prototantric' influence), see McBride 2005. For Buddhism and magic, particularly magical means of controlling nature and natural dangers, see Schmithausen 1997. For an abridged translation of a complete ritual manual, the *Kriyāsaṃgraha*, which gives a good insight into late Indian Buddhist ritual, including its magical elements, see Skorupski 2002.

2. On the (sometimes phenomenal feats of) memorization of Mahāyāna sūtras, and the translation of memorized sūtras in China, see de Jong 1979: 86. The extent to which there are meditation instructions embedded within the sūtras has recently been emphasized by Paul Harrison (2003: 117–22) particularly with reference to the visualization sūtras such as those associated with Pure Lands, like the *Sukhāvatīvyūha* or *Akṣobhyavyūha Sūtras*.
3. The use of verse numbers as a means of identifying specifically Perfection of Wisdom sūtras is an Indo-Tibetan (and hence also modern Western) tradition. It is not followed in East Asia.
4. But we have to be careful here. The extant Sanskrit text (and any Tibetan translation) is often much later than the earliest Chinese translations. The principle that if something is lacking in the earliest Chinese translations and present in the Sanskrit and/or the Tibetan it must have been added after the time of the earliest Chinese translations has recently been put into question by some of the fragments of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā* (8,000-verse) *Perfection of Wisdom Sūtra* found (perhaps from Bāmiyān) in Afghanistan and included among the Schøyen manuscripts (see Chapter 1 above). These date on paleographic grounds from probably the latter half of the third century CE and are described by their editor Lore Sander as 'remarkably close' to the extant Sanskrit edition based on Nepalese manuscripts from the eleventh–twelfth centuries. But they contain material lacking in the earliest Chinese translations (late second century). Prior to the discovery of these fragments one would have considered the sections lacking in the early Chinese (Lokakṣema) translation to have been added probably long after that time. It suggests that even as early as the second or third centuries CE there may have been different recensions of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā* available in India and Central Asia (see Braarvig 2000: 1 ff.; 285–8).
5. This is the **Śūraṃgama Sūtra* (*Shouleng'yan Jing*; *Leng-yen Ching*); to be distinguished from the *Śūraṃgamasamādhi Sūtra*, that has a genuine Indian provenance. On East Asian 'apocryphal sūtras', see Buswell 1989 and 1990. For a quick general survey of apocrypha in Buddhism, see Tokuno 2004.
6. Everyone agreed that the Buddha himself died in North India. Conze (1960: 10) has 'West' for 'East' here, but perhaps this is a slip. The Sanskrit reads *vartanyāṃ*. See also Bareau (1955: 296–305). For cautious comments on Bareau's hypothesis of a central/southern origin for Mahāyāna in the light of recent developments in Buddhist Studies, see Deleanu 2000: 101–2, n. 80; 2005b repr.: 63).
7. Nevertheless, Prajñāpāramitā or not, contemporary scholars are beginning to see more and more evidence of north-western and Central Asian influence on at least some Mahāyāna sūtras. Walser comments that 'several prominent Mahāyāna *sūtras* betray a northwestern origin' (2005: 25; including examples). This might indicate the impact of the north-west Indian Kuṣāṇa empire which was part of an extensive empire based in Central Asia during (arguably) precisely the time of Mahāyāna emergence. The association of the north-west and Central Asia with at least some important Mahāyāna sūtras may also reflect the presence of Mahāyāna within the Dharmaguptaka sect, which as far as

we know was influential only in north-west India, Central Asia and China (hence the prominence of the *Dharmaguptaka Vinaya* in Chinese Buddhism). But for some justified reservations on the association of the Dharmaguptakas as a whole with Mahāyāna, see Walser 2005: 52–3.

8. Into this category would come the equally famous *Prajñāpāramitāhṛdaya (Heart) Sūtra*. Note, however, that Jan Nattier (1992) has argued at length that this sūtra is really a Chinese creation, introduced into India in the seventh century CE by Xuanzang who was perhaps also responsible for its translation into Sanskrit. In general, it is not impossible that texts may have been composed in Chinese and subsequently translated into Sanskrit and introduced into India. That the idea of 'reverse transmission' was by no means unthinkable is shown by a Chinese story that in India a monk asked for Chinese works of the Tiantai (T'ien-t'ai) school to be translated into Sanskrit. The story, though, is unreliable (Sen 2003: 83–4). But we know of at least two late sixth-/early seventh-century cases where the translation seems to have occurred, and the introduction into India may well have done (*ibid*.: 52–3, 63). One Chinese monk writing in the tenth century in support of reverse transmission suggested that had it not occurred the Indians would not have understood Buddhism properly (*ibid*.: 137–9).
9. For her part Nattier (2003a: 180, n. 18) has suggested that 'the *Vajracchedikā* is the product of an environment quite separate from the ones that produced most of the other *prajñāpāramitā* texts'. In the first edition of this book I added that '[n]o notice has been taken, I think, of the quotations from the *Diamond Sūtra* contained in the *Sūtrasamuccaya*, the attribution of which to Nāgārjuna (*c*. second century CE) has not yet been disproved'. Paul Harrison (forthcoming) has now to my mind suggested good arguments to disprove this attribution.
10. In particular Conze betrays his own bias in the expression 'concessions to the Buddhism of Faith', a bias which has perhaps affected his discussions on relative chronological priority of sections within, particularly, the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā* (Conze 1967a: 168 ff.). See also Nattier (2003a: 49–50). A great deal of research has been carried out on the textual history of the Prajñāpāramitā literature by Japanese scholars. For a useful bibliographical guide in English, but unfortunately only up to 1980, see Nakamura 1980. Not mentioned among these texts are apocryphal Prajñāpāramitā texts. One in particular was enormously important in East Asia for its political significance, the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra for Humane Kings Who Wish to Protect Their State* (Chinese: *Renwang huguo boreboluomiduo jing*). For a study, see Orzech 1998.
11. 'Insight' might be better, but it is commonly used to translate (the connected concept of) *vipaśyanā*. I keep the translation 'wisdom' for *prajñā* for this reason, together with its common usage in this context, with the reservations of the present section as a gloss. For a detailed comparative discussion of the perfection of wisdom in the relatively early *Bodhisattvapiṭaka Sūtra* (which is not itself classed as a Perfection of Wisdom sūtra) and a number of other Indian Mahāyāna sources, particularly sūtras, see Pagel 1995: 240–316, and the translation in *ibid*. Ch. 5. Pagel suggests 'discriminative understanding' for *prajñā*.

12. See the Fifth Dalai Lama in Hopkins (1974: 3), for example.
13. Conze 1960: 9; cf. Avalokitavrata in Walser 2005: 53 (reference to a paper by Peter Skilling). The implication of this is that it is possible to have a Prajñāpāramitā that is not in itself Mahāyāna. It is not clear what form this would take, particularly if one wishes to avoid an essentialist notion of what 'Mahāyāna' is. But presumably it might teach emptiness of *dharmas* within a context of the path to Arhatship without particularly advocating the path of the Bodhisattva to Buddhahood. Whether this was the original form of the very earliest [proto-] Prajñāpāramitā sūtras is unclear.
14. For a modern Japanese critique of these trends in Buddhism, and the whole idea of nonconceptual insight as a Buddhist goal or what Buddhism is about, see the 'Critical Buddhism' movement (Chapter 5 below).
15. See Nattier (2003a: 241, n. 240) for the translation of *kṣānti* by 'endurance' rather than the more common 'patience'. She also notes a suggestion by Schopen (1989: 139, n. 20) that it could be translated as 'composure' (i.e. 'unaffected [by]').
16. Lance Cousins points out to me a connection of Subhūti in the pre-Mahāyāna traditions with *mettā*, loving kindness. Hence the choice of Subhūti in the Mahāyāna may possibly reflect a correspondingly greater emphasis on compassion.
17. Trans. in Conze 1973a: 300; all citations of *Aṣṭa* and *Ratna* are to this translation. Note however that Lore Sander (in Braarvig 2000: 5) has commented on Conze's translation of *Aṣṭa* that he 'rendered the text often freely and abbreviated the numerous repetitions'. Of course, in trying to produce a readable translation Conze would not be the first to abbreviate repetitions. This was common from early times in, e.g., Chinese translations of Buddhist sūtras.
18. Recall, however, the suggestion in Chapter 1 that this teaching of complete emptiness may originally have been a strategy for encouraging a deep, complete, renunciation, a 'letting-go' of possessions, the social world, and so on, an undercutting too of arrogance in the Bodhisattvas' achievements, and an encouragement of the abandonment urged and sought by forest hermits, rather than a philosophical or ontological position as such. It may thus have been at least in part a polemical position in the rhetoric of inter-monastic rivalry, and 'spiritual therapy' in the context of exhortation among Bodhisattvas. It may also have reflected in some way the mind-altering/altered states of deep meditation.
19. Note here that the concept of 'Self' has shifted in this conceptual context from 'Self' understood as the individual unchanging core of a sentient being (such as the human Self; i.e. the common meaning of the word *ātman* when applied to sentient individuals) to that of the unchanging core of anything at all (i.e. perhaps something like its essence, or that which gives it its essential identity). In the case of *dharmas* this 'Self' becomes identified with their 'intrinsic nature'. See Chapter 3 below.
20. As we shall see, that Śrāvakas do understand complete emptiness is for a number of Mahāyāna sūtras (including Perfection of Wisdom sūtras) the reason why the Śrāvakas are able to 'fall into' emptiness and hence become Arhats. Thus they abandon sentient beings and are thereby defective in comparison with Bodhisattvas and Buddhas. There

is no suggestion that their defect lies in the emptiness side of the equation. Rather the defect is in their compassion. It is thus reasonable in Buddhist terms for, e.g., Candrakīrti to argue that the Buddha taught emptiness of *dharmas* to Śrāvakas as well as to Mahāyānists. Note, however, that the view of Candrakīrti that the Buddha taught emptiness of *dharmas* to Śrāvakas was by no means held by all followers of Mahāyāna either in India or elsewhere (such as China). Among others, Candrakīrti's great rival as a Mādhyamika commentator, Bhāvaviveka, apparently denied that Śrāvakas understand emptiness, in the sense of emptiness of intrinsic nature of *dharmas*. For a discussion, in the Indo-Tibetan context, see Lopez 1988. In East Asian Buddhism, in, e.g., the Chinese Huayan school (see Chapter 6 below), it is normal to hold that non-Mahāyānists do not understand complete emptiness of *dharmas* as well as of Self. Emptiness of *dharmas* there is given as a characteristically Mahāyāna teaching.

21. Pratyekabuddhas are a category of enlightened beings superior to the Arhats but still deficient in compassion from the Mahāyāna point of view. They are classed with the Arhats as non-Mahāyāna saints, and there is said to be a Pratyekabuddhayāna along with the Śrāvakayāna (Hearer) and Mahāyāna. The whole notion of the Pratyekabuddha requires further research. It is unclear whether it was ever anything more than a theoretical construct.
22. For a much later Tibetan discussion of this whole topic, see the subcommentary to the *Madhyamakāvatāra* by Tsong kha pa, in Hopkins (1980: 150–81). For other cases of Mahāyāna sūtras that advocate their own particular message or text as useful for Śrāvakas in attaining their own particular goal, as well as for Bodhisattvas, see Nattier 2003a: 81, n. 15. Note that in the *Aṣṭa*, again, there is no opposition to the Śrāvakayāna as such (as if the Bodhisattvayāna were finally the only legitimate path) but rather a wholehearted advocacy of the importance of the message of the sūtra. Becoming an Arhat is still a worthwhile, important, and indeed difficult achievement that can be helped by accepting the Buddha's teaching in the Mahāyāna sūtras (or, perhaps more accurately, in the *Aṣṭa* itself).
23. The bird that flies to Buddhahood, Candrakīrti says, has two wings – wisdom and compassion.
24. For an account of the Bodhisattva's analysis through *dharmas* and beyond, see the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa Sūtra*, translation in Lamotte (1962: 228 ff.). This is not a Prajñāpāramitā sūtra, but it is a sūtra broadly of the Prajñāpāramitā type. For Tsong kha pa's criticisms of the 'blank mind', see Wayman (1978: 395; cf. Thurman 1982: 176 ff.; see Bibliography below for a more recent and preferable translation of the text contained in Wayman 1978).
25. There are problems with the etymology of *bodhisattva*. If I may be permitted to quote myself (Williams 2005a; cf. also Kajiyama 1982): 'There is no significant difficulty with the meaning of *bodhi*. This derives from the Indo-Āryan root *budh-*, from which the word *Buddha* also derives. It is literally "awakening", or "enlightenment". The real problem is with *sattva*. This commonly means in Sanskrit a "[sentient] being", an "essence", or

sometimes "courage". Thus a Bodhisattva would be an "enlightenment-being", "one who has enlightenment as essence", or occasionally perhaps an "enlightenment-hero". And that is how the term is regularly glossed in Buddhist Sanskrit sources. But it is not clear how it relates to one that has not yet attained the goal of enlightenment. Norman (1990–2001; 1993 vol.: 87) suggests that *bodhisattva* may have been "back-formed" as part of sanskritization of Middle Indo-Āryan (such as Pali) expressions. Thus the Middle Indo-Āryan *bodhisatta* has been sanskritized as *bodhisattva*. There are other possible alternatives, however, and these alternatives fit better with explanations given for the etymology of *bodhisatta* in Pali commentaries. The Sanskrit of *bodhisatta* could equally be *bodhisakta* = "directed towards enlightenment", or it could be *bodhiśakta* = "capable of enlightenment". Clearly these etymologies make better sense.

26. See below for examples where 'celestial Bodhisattvas' are said to usurp the characteristic role of Buddhas.
27. Properly, the word *upāya* signifies 'means', 'expedients', or 'stratagems', with the implication that they are clever means and stratagems, well-suited to their goal. 'Skill-in-means', or cleverness in applying stratagems, as an acquired ability of, e.g., a Bodhisattva or Buddha, is *upāyakauśalya* ('tactical skill'; Nattier 2003a). For more on this concept, see Chapter 7 below.
28. For Avalokiteśvara, see Chapter 10 below. The *Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra* is an important source for the cult of Avalokiteśvara in India, and it appears to be the Indian origin of the famous mantra *oṃ maṇipadme hūṃ*. On this sūtra, Avalokiteśvara, and the mantra, see Studholme 2002. For critical comments on the very notion of 'celestial' Bodhisattvas, see Harrison 2000.
29. Paul Harrison (1987; 2005b repr.: 122) has emphasized that in the earliest Mahāyāna sūtra literature the Bodhisattvas were not at all celestial beings who were to be worshipped but rather a very definite group of Buddhists whom one should join if one were capable of doing so. Nevertheless, that there were (mythic) examples of Bodhisattvas whose heroic acts we should admire (and perhaps join in if we can – but is that the main idea?) is shown by jātaka-type stories as far as we can tell from reasonably early on in Mahāyāna.
30. For more on body-burning in Mahāyāna and other forms of self-harming out of religious enthusiasm, see Chapter 7 below.
31. In spite of the cost of books, nowadays the teachings are somewhat cheaper, and for that reason perhaps less valued.
32. Note, in the light of our discussion in Chapter 1 of the role of visions, dreams and instruction by gods in Mahāyāna sūtras, the part played here by instruction from a voice in the sky, and the way in which Sadāprarudita is also tested by a god.
33. Beyer was one of the earliest to draw attention to the frequency of such visionary tales in the early Mahāyāna. In this article he speaks of the visionary nature of the Mahāyāna in general, and the Prajñāpāramitā in particular. He is interested in it however more as a motif, a strategy of ontological deconstruction, than in what it tells us about the actual visionary and dream genesis of the Mahāyāna itself.

34. There is a tradition in Tibetan Buddhism of three types of Bodhisattvas in accordance with their motivation: (i) the kingly sort, who aims quickly to attain Buddhahood first and then as a Buddha to bring to fulfilment their vows to help other sentient beings to enlightenment (= Buddhahood?); (ii) the boatman, who intends to take everyone in the boat to enlightenment at the same time as themselves; and (iii) the shepherd, who aims to place all in the fold of enlightenment first. It is indeed sometimes said that the last is the highest (Sangpo 1982: 128–9; see also Makransky 1997: 338–9; the source in both cases is a Tibetan text by Paltrul Rinpoche, but it goes back much further). But note that these are a Bodhisattva's *motivations*. The suggestion is that the shepherd is the highest inasmuch as it is the highest motivation. Such compassionate renunciation is what leads most quickly to Buddhahood (Kensur Pema Gyaltsen). In spite of Tibetan claims Jenkins (1999: 5, n. 2) states that he has not found an Indian source for this tripartite distinction.
35. This *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā* material is also discussed in Jenkins 1999: 97–9. In fact (*pace* Lethcoe), the *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā* also says that the Bodhisattva vows that 'after we have known full enlightenment we should lead all beings to Nirvana' (quoted above). One should note, however, that the *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā*'s 'irreversible' Bodhisattvas seem to be able to do all the things a Buddha can. It is possible that at these rarefied levels, in the eyes of nonsystematic piety, advanced Bodhisattvas and Buddhas have simply been conflated.
36. On H-Buddhism, summarized for the discussion group by John McRae (17 April 2005). I am grateful to my colleague John Kieschnick for drawing this discussion to my attention, and providing me with a copy of McRae's helpful summary. See Jenkins 1999: 88 ff. in particular for a careful critical reading of some passages that are sometimes cited as suggesting 'postponement'. Jenkins urges a much more nuanced and sensitive understanding of the interplay in Mahāyāna between a Bodhisattva's seeking to help others and his directly working towards Buddhahood which of course is also for his own benefit.
37. The same expression is sometimes also found referring to the state of advanced Bodhisattvas (see Makransky 1997: 341, apparently from Bhāvaviveka, and here *contrasting* with that of Buddhas).
38. As we shall see in Chapter 10, this does seem to be the suggestion of some of the Pure Land sūtras like the (relatively early) Larger *Sukhāvatīvyūha Sūtra*. Here it seems that there are two routes to Buddhahood, a shorter one and a longer one. Both involve rebirth in the Pure Land. But some very rare and rather superior beings, in order to help others in multifarious ways out of their compassion, wish to spend a very long time becoming Buddhas. Others can, through rebirth in the Pure Land, like Maitreya move towards Buddhahood in their very next life. Why one might wish to adopt a longer path – what in terms of compassionate deeds is so defective about Buddhahood – is not explained.
39. Makransky (1997: 337–8) refers to it as a 'doctrinal experiment' involving a stretching of the understanding of the third Noble Truth (that of cessation) to allow for the Bodhisattva's compassionate activity. The experiment was superseded by that of the

apratiṣṭhita nirvāṇa, and the Bodhisattva's achievement of it as a Buddha. But textual sources containing such earlier doctrinal experiments continued to circulate as 'archaic remnants in tension with the model that superseded them'.

40. Effectively this is what a Bodhisattva vows, presumably in accordance with the older model, if he or she vows not to achieve Buddhahood until all other sentient beings have done so first, especially if the number of sentient beings is infinite. (In a way this appears to be recognized in, e.g., the *Lankāvatāra Sūtra*, in Makransky 1997: 339, but its interpretation is complicated and arguably neutralized by the immediate 'transcendental' addition that all things are ontologically 'nirvāṇized' and therefore there is no attaining of nirvāṇa/Buddhahood really anyway. If the vowing not to attain Buddhahood before all others is only in the light of ontological (ultimate) truth, then on the conventional everyday level a Bodhisattva can still attain Buddhahood, and attain it ahead of others. On the *Lankāvatāra* material, see also Jenkins 1999: 93–6.) Perhaps something like a postponement model is more common in day-to-day Buddhism in China and East Asia. If so this perhaps reflects in part the relatively early transmission and development of Buddhism in China, before a clearly articulated concept of *apratiṣṭhita* nirvāṇa had developed in India. Makransky points out that texts incorporating an earlier model were still promulgated in Mahāyāna circles after the rise of the *apratiṣṭhita* nirvāṇa model. The emphasis of East Asian Buddhism on sūtras from all phases of Buddhism in India (rather than scholastic discussions and interpretations) may have encouraged 'postponement-type language'. There is also, e.g., a Chinese tradition that great Mahāyāna Bodhisattvas such as Avalokiteśvara (Chinese: Guanyin or Kuan-yin) have rejected Buddhahood in order better to help sentient beings. That makes no sense on the *apratiṣṭhita* nirvāṇa model. But it does on the earlier model, if Buddhahood is seen as being in some way defective in compassion when compared with being a Bodhisattva. Influential on the Chinese understanding of this may have been what is perhaps one of the clearest cases of a great Bodhisattva 'postponing' Buddhahood – arguably effectively vowing not to become a Buddha at all – that of the Bodhisattva Kṣitigarbha (Chinese: Dizang or Ti-tsang) in the *Kṣitigarbhabodhisattvapraṇidhāna Sūtra*. This sūtra is little known in India but particularly popular in Chinese Buddhism (see Jenkins 1999: 102–5, who comments that here the great 'celestial' Bodhisattva has really usurped the function (i.e. the particular type of salvific religious role) of a Buddha. The sūtra is quite aware that this sort of thing is extraordinary, an exception to the norm; on Kṣitigarbha see also Chapter 10 below). Bhāvaviveka (probably *c.* 500–570 CE) notes as one of the objections of non-Mahāyānists towards Mahāyānists that they praise Bodhisattvas more than Buddhas (Makransky 1997: 443, n. 47).
41. We still do not yet find the notion of the *apratiṣṭhita* nirvāṇa, entailing that a Buddha remains forever helping sentient beings, in the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka Sūtra*. See Makransky (1997: 344), and Chapter 7 below.
42. A related issue of interest was also correspondingly what the signs of irreversibility might be in the path to Buddhahood. On signs of irreversibility, including dream signs and

ability to enact exorcisms through an 'act of truth', see, e.g., *Aṣṭa* in Conze 1973a: 200 ff., 226–9.

43. As, e.g., Bhāvaviveka suggests (see Eckel 1992: 173–4). For translation of a much later Chinese source that speaks of the Bodhisattva allowing 'the sweat-filled dress to cling still to his body [a]nd the fine defilements to hinder (his attainment of) the One' as a means of 'delaying extinction', see Whalen Lai in Foard *et al.* 1996: 205. The *Ratnagotravibhāga*, however, steps back from the assertion that Bodhisattvas really have passions or moral taints (*kleśa*). What keeps Bodhisattvas in contact with suffering sentient beings are 'taints' only metaphorically (Makransky 1997: 341–2).
44. One result of this, suggested in the *Ratna* (1: vv. 10–11), is that the Bodhisattva, attaining meditative absorption on nonproduction (= emptiness), knowing that all things are empty, is then no longer concerned with whether he is in meditative absorption or not.
45. It is worth remembering that whatever gave rise to a Mahāyāna sūtra like the *Aṣṭa*, and indeed how such works were originally used, the sūtra is certainly not in itself a complete and sufficient 'Teach Yourself' set of instructions for meditation. For some further Indian discussions of the technology of how to avoid falling into the state of an Arhat, see Jenkins 1999: 135 ff.
46. 'Wishless' is used here for *apraṇihita* because it is such a common translation. But 'aimless' or 'directionless' might be better. See the discussion in Deleanu 2000: 93–4, n. 23 (2005b repr.: 56–7). See also Deleanu 2000: 35–40.
47. These are known as the 'outflows' (*āsrava*). Since they consist of sense desire, becoming, ignorance and false views it is here that we can see the Bodhisattva deliberately *keeping* in some sense 'negative' factors that wider mainstream Buddhism would seek to eliminate (see above). In what sense does the Bodhisattva still have these, and in what sense are they modified and now 'redeemed', and brought under his control, no longer really to be thought of as 'negative taints'? Note too that the Bodhisattva also practises meditation states (*dhyāna*), which might normally be expected to lead automatically to rebirths in higher realms of saṃsāra than the human realm. However in practising meditation states with an insight into emptiness, but employing clever means and stratagems powered by his vows of compassion, the Bodhisattva comes to dominate the rebirth process in a way that entails his rebirths are not generated by any sort of karma – negative or otherwise – and hence automatic rebirths in higher realms do not follow for him (see Deleanu 2000: 71; 2005b repr.: 33, with reference to, e.g., *Aṣṭa* (Conze 1973a: 204, 250); Jenkins 1999: 116–17, reference to, e.g., the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa Sūtra* (Thurman 1976: 46–7) among other sūtras).
48. One of the implications of this is that the constant stress on compassion in Mahāyāna sources may at least in part be a meditation strategy, a strategy to enforce an embedded awareness of particular objects (sentient beings) alongside awareness of emptiness in order to offset any tendency to attain the enlightenment of an Arhat and thus leave the Bodhisattva path to Buddhahood. That it was at least sometimes *primarily* a meditation strategy would fit with what we saw of early Mahāyāna originating among forest hermits engaged in meditation, and not among town-dwelling social activists.

49. At least, he does not realize or fall into emptiness until he has achieved all the factors necessary for Buddhahood. Then, the *Aṣṭa* suggests (conforming therefore to the earlier 'postponing' model), as a Buddha he finally does (Conze 1973a: 224–5). Note that the Bodhisattva here does not seem to practise different meditations from those practised in Mainstream Buddhism. Rather it is a question of how they are interpreted, the manner in which they are practised, and how they combined. See Deleanu 2000: 69 ff. (2005b repr.: 31 ff.). For critical reflections, see Deleanu (2000: 76–8; 2005b: 37–40), who suggests that the actual simultaneous combination in the mind of the Bodhisattva of absorption on emptiness and compassion for suffering others must be 'a doctrinally motivated move meant to portray the exalted ideal of the *bodhisattva*'s messianic mission rather than a psychological reality' (*ibid.*: 38). The problem of how there could be a mental state that combined in the same act direct awareness of emptiness with compassionate awareness of others was much discussed in Tibet, where it is commonly said (in, e.g., dGe lugs, pronounced: 'Geluk', sources) uniquely to characterize a Buddha's omniscient awareness. Before that time it is more a question of one mental state, as it were, being infused by prior awareness of the other, or alternating with the other (see Newland 1992: 192). On not directly realizing emptiness, see also Jenkins 1999: Ch. 3, esp. 126 ff. (contains *inter alia* a criticism of an interpretation of 'not directly realizing emptiness' found in Braarvig 1993; book not seen).
50. This meditation state may be *nirodhasamāpatti* – the attainment of cessation (see Jennings 1999: 136 ff.). But whether that could itself be identified with the nirvāṇa of an Arhat is another issue. In much of Buddhism a literal identification of *nirodhasamāpatti* with nirvāṇa would be problematic, whatever some Mahāyāna sources might suggest. For evidence however that sometimes they might be identified, and discussion of the problem, see Griffiths 1986.
51. See Jenkins 1999: 146; reference to the Tatz translation 1994: 52. This sūtra, on clever stratagems (*upāya*), is not in itself a Perfection of Wisdom sūtra. I shall return to it particularly in Chapter 7 below. Notice here the possible allusion to the idea that what may be considered to be the nirvāṇa of an Arhat is actually no real nirvāṇa at all. It is simply the result of a mistake, a confusion. In fact the only real nirvāṇa is Buddhahood, the *apratiṣṭhita* nirvāṇa for the benefit of all sentient beings. This theme is most well known from the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka Sūtra*. We shall meet it again, too, in Chapter 7. The inclusive idea that one's opponents have achieved *an* achievement, and are right as far as they go, but have not reached their (perhaps unrealized) final goal is a common Indian model (as pointed out to me by my colleague Rupert Gethin).

Chapter 3 Mādhyamika

1. From the Cone edition of the Tibetan version (f. 242a). On purported prophecies of Nāgārjuna by the Buddha in Mahāyāna sūtras, see, e.g., Walser 2005: 71–3.
2. Tillemans (2001: 2) points out, with reference to the research of May (1979: 472), that the attempt to make a systematic distinction between *Madhyamaka* as a noun for the

school and *Mādhyamika* as an adjectival expression for the school's adherents (or what pertains to the Madhyamaka) lacks rigorous support in the Sanskrit texts. In what follows I shall use *Mādhyamika* throughout except where *Madhyamaka* occurs in book titles.

3. For good recent discussions of the chronology and sources, see Mabbett 1998 and Walser 2005: esp. Ch. 2.
4. It is worth noting this association of Nāgārjuna with Sukhāvatī and perhaps more directly with Amitābha, since at least one text attributed by the East Asian tradition to Nāgārjuna (albeit with considerable modern doubt: e.g. Robinson 1967: 74; Nattier 2003a: 18–19, both with reference to a 1957 article in Japanese by Hirakawa), the so-called **Daśabhūmikavibhāṣā*, speaks enthusiastically of relying on the merits of Amitābha in order to attain rebirth in Sukhāvatī and thence enlightenment. Part of this text was available in Chinese, already attributed to Nāgārjuna, by around the late third century CE (Walser 2005: 62). Whether or not the **Daśabhūmikavibhāṣā* is by Nāgārjuna himself, it helps to break down any tendency towards too ready a divorce of 'philosophical' Mādhyamika from connection with Pure Land cultic practice. Clearly at least some people thought the 'philosophical' Nāgārjuna capable of writing it.
5. For an earlier account of the life of Nāgārjuna preserved in Chinese, apparently translated by Kumārajīva early in the fifth century CE, see Corless 1995a. Already Nāgārjuna is portrayed primarily as a magician, a man of miracles in a hagiography showing distinct signs of patterning on that of Śākyamuni. This is not surprising. One major purpose of a hagiography is to show the impressive achievement (*siddhi*) of its subject, achievement that is structured for Buddhists according to the prototypical achievements, those of Śākyamuni Buddha. The purpose of recounting achievement is to impress the hagiography's target audience. As we saw in Chapter 1, one major reason for needing to impress the audience is that of competition with rivals.
6. For some critical (while not dismissive) reflections on the 'two Nāgārjunas' theory, see Walser 2005: 69.
7. Contextualizing Nāgārjuna within the world of Mahāyāna Buddhism in south India at that time, Joseph Walser (2005: 87–8) argues that it is highly unlikely that Nāgārjuna could have lived in a monastery that was exclusively Mahāyāna. Nāgārjuna hence dwelt in a mixed monastery, also containing monks with no Mahāyāna allegiance and possibly quite antagonistic to it. This context, with the need to *appeal* to surrounding non-Mahāyānists if not for sympathy at least for toleration of Mahāyāna and particularly the Mahāyāna sūtras, is an important theme of Walser's book and his understanding of Nāgārjuna's intentions. Nāgārjuna may have attacked non-Mahāyāna doctrinal positions associated with sects and schools *rival* to those Nāgārjuna lived among. If so, this may have also been part of an appeal for toleration in Nāgārjuna's immediate school and sectarian surroundings of a Mahāyāna that was still very much under attack and unsure of itself. To attack someone's rival might be done in the hope of making a friend.
8. Often known as the 'Fundamental' or 'Root' (*mūla*) *Madhyamakakārikā*. It is not clear what this text was called originally. It may have been called simply 'Wisdom'

(*Prajñā*). One sensible approach to the 'teachings of Nāgārjuna' is to take this text as axiomatically by the Master. Then other works attributed to him by tradition that cohere with the *Madhyamakakārikā* can also be accepted. But note that this approach would minimize any possibility that Nāgārjuna may have evolved his ideas, or changed his mind.

9. The *Ratnāvalī* is interesting, among other reasons, for the political and social advice given by Nāgārjuna to the king. Nāgārjuna's pupil Āryadeva also treats this topic in the fourth chapter of his *Catuḥśatakakārikā* (Lang 1992). For another important source of practical Mahāyāna political and social teaching, see the *Bodhisattvagocaropāyaviṣayavikurvaṇanirdeśa Sūtra* (Zimmermann 1999).
10. For a discussion of issues of authenticity, and bibliography, see Lindtner 1982. Lindtner considers the *Bodhicittavivaraṇa* to be authentic. For reasons why it seems to me this cannot be correct, see Williams 1984.
11. Although how much truth there is in this is debatable. Nāgārjuna seems to have considered himself to be attacking anyone who would hold that anything at all has more reality than that of a practical conceptual construct. As the Perfection of Wisdom literature had asserted, everything no matter how exalted is simply 'like an illusion'. But even where his attack is on positions held by some Abhidharma scholars, this should not obscure the great deal Nāgārjuna has in common with them. Inasmuch as he treats reductive analysis, and 'seeing things the way they really are', Nāgārjuna too is an 'Abhidharma scholar' (it is arguable that *Abhidharma* is the nearest term for what we might call 'Buddhist philosophy'), and there is no reason to assume that just because he disagrees with the concept of *svabhāva* (intrinsic nature, as entailing intrinsic existence) Nāgārjuna is hostile to the psychological reductive analysis of the Abhidharma as such.
12. For detailed summaries of these texts, and many others, see Potter 1999.
13. Even in Tibet there was by no means unanimity on what *were* the identifiable features for subschool membership. For example, was it necessary (as the dGe lugs urged) to deny that consciousness, or awareness, required the feature of reflexivity ('self-awareness'; *svasaṃvedana*, Tibetan: *rang rig* – consciousness being by its very nature aware of itself in the very same act as it is aware of others) even conventionally in order to be classed as a Prāsaṅgika Mādhyamika? That a denial of the reflexivity of awareness even conventionally is an identifiable feature of the Prāsaṅgika Mādhyamika position, and both Candrakīrti and Śāntideva are members of this identifiable subschool of Prāsaṅgika Mādhyamika, may have led to distorting the position of Śāntideva. At least, this was argued in Tibet against the dGe lugs by, e.g., Mi pham (1846–1912). On this issue, see Williams 1998a.
14. For more now on the Svātantrika and Prāsaṅgika distinction, see the papers in McClintock and Dreyfus 2003.
15. On scholasticism in Tibet, the applicability of this term, and its features, see in particular the work of José Cabezón (e.g. 1994). To see it in practice cf. Dreyfus 2003.

16. Cf. in Chapters 6 and 7 below the Chinese system of hierarchically ranking sūtras (*panjiao*; *p'an-chiao*) as another response to the same problem of organizing the sheer quantity of incoming Indian Buddhist material in order to begin to make doctrinal and indeed practical sense of it all.
17. For Buddhapālita's Mādhyamika, see Ames 1986.
18. On the other hand how important Candrakīrti was in specifically Indian Mādhyamika requires further research. There is little by way of Indian commentaries on Candrakīrti's work (and what there is dates from around the late tenth century). It is notable that when Buddhism was transmitted to Tibet from around the eighth century CE the Mādhyamika texts and traditions favoured seem to have been the so-called 'Yogācāra-Svātantrika Mādhyamika' of Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla, who were themselves involved in the mission to Tibet. The approach of Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla remains standard in early Tibetan Buddhism and (while not always specified as such) continues in some circles to the present day. Within Tibet Candrakīrti's texts were not translated, nor does his approach appear to have been much studied, until the eleventh century (see Williams 1989).
19. The *Bodhicaryāvatāra* may have been called originally, or alternatively, the *Bodhisattvacaryāvatāra*.
20. This is true in particular of the Svātantrika subschool. See, e.g., Iida 1980, Lopez 1987, Eckel 1978 (on Mādhyamika theories of language), Eckel 1986, Eckel 1992 (particularly on Bhāvaviveka and the nature of Buddhahood) and McClintock and Dreyfus 2003. For the Mādhyamika in general, see Ruegg 1981.
21. Or perhaps it is simply part of a much later Tibetan attempt to delineate subschools, a response of later specifically Tibetan, rather than Indian, scholastic precision.
22. For Tsong kha pa's arguments, see his *Lam rim chen mo*, trans. in, e.g., Wayman 1978: 279–83. Cf. also Hopkins 1983: 441–53. It should by no means be assumed that this way of delineating the essential difference between Svātantrika and Prāsaṅgika would necessarily be shared by other non-dGe lugs Tibetan scholars. For a detailed study on the *svabhāva* in Candrakīrti, see Ames 1982.
23. On this text, see Gómez and Silk 1989, and Padmakara 2005.
24. Note also that Yogācāra scholars such as Dharmapāla (*c.* 530–61) and Sthiramati (*c.* 510–70) wrote Mādhyamika commentaries. In terms of interests, authorship and ways of interpretation the Buddhist philosophical schools were not totally isolated from each other. That another school is wrong in some respects does not make it wrong in all respects.
25. In, for example, Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma it simply does not follow that because something has a *svabhāva* it should thus be thought to be independent of causes and conditions. Most *dharmas* result from causes and conditions, although they do not result from conceptual imputation and are hence not the result of *that specific sort* of causation. Thus in Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma to have a *svabhāva* is not to have intrinsic *existence*. But Tillemans (2001: 12–13) points out that it is a common strategy in Mādhyamika to argue

that whether or not the opponent accepts initially and explicitly a particular position attributed to them, they may be forced to accept that position in order to be consistent once all the implications of their initial doctrinal position are pointed out to them. Hayes (1994) argues that in fact Nāgārjuna uses *svabhāva* in a number of different ways in his arguments, and in this and other ways Nāgārjuna's arguments are fallacious and would certainly fail to refute convincingly his opponents. Tillemans suggests that Hayes' criticisms, and also somewhat similar criticisms of Nāgārjuna in Robinson (1972), while having some truth, are perhaps less than fully fair to Nāgārjuna and the Mādhyamika. Apart from anything else, for a philosopher's arguments to fail does not mean the arguments are uninteresting and study of them can teach us nothing, or the philosopher was simply cheating. To contend or show that they *are* fallacious, or ultimately fail, may require a great deal of interesting and valuable analysis and debate. A philosophical approach or vision may be fruitful or educative even where the details finally fail to convince, and it is always open to someone (for example, in the case of Mādhyamika a much later thinker like the Tibetan Tsong kha pa) to return to the issue with different and better arguments or to tinker with the arguments and reinterpret them in a plausibly more convincing form (perhaps a good parallel to Mādhyamika here could be found in study of, e.g., a Graeco-Roman sceptic such as Sextus Empiricus; cf. Burton 1999). An alternative (and possibly complementary to Tillemans') approach to the alleged weakness of Nāgārjuna's arguments can be found in Walser 2005. Walser considers that one of Nāgārjuna's main purposes was to gain acceptance or at least toleration of Mahāyāna in the communities in which he lived. Nāgārjuna attacked rival sects and schools to those in which he dwelled. Thus Nāgārjuna's arguments were in part intended to impress his hosts, criticizing their rivals. Whether Nāgārjuna's arguments could stand up to the critical tools of modern analytic philosophy was certainly not in his mind and is arguably irrelevant. From this perspective it might be pertinent to consider whether Nāgārjuna was really a *philosopher* at all (i.e. someone engaged in the same activity as what has come to be called philosophy in Western discourse).

26. As Walser (2005: 117–18) points out, often in mainstream Buddhism the term 'emptiness' was used to refer to a state of consciousness that results from a series of meditations in which defilements are eliminated. We find this sense too in the Prajñāpāramitā, referring to, e.g., the mental state of *prajñā* (see Chapter 2 above). But the expression is used also (in certain Mahāyāna sūtras, for example) for a property of *dharmas* themselves. It is in that sense that it is taken up here as a Mādhyamika technical term.
27. That dependent origination *itself* cannot be emptiness, since if this were the case then when we saw dependent origination (i.e. something coming into existence dependent upon its causes and conditions) we would then see emptiness (which is a relatively advanced achievement), is a point made by certain dGe lugs writers in Tibet. See Lopez 1989, and for a full study of the theme in dGe lugs Mādhyamika, see Napper 1989.
28. That we all, as unenlightened beings, *do* as a matter of fact see most things presented to us as having real, intrinsic, existence and that spiritual growth and the end of

suffering lies in eliminating that way of seeing things, if queried would require elaborate psychological and perhaps phenomenological as well as religious analysis. It would not appear to be simply, or indeed primarily, a philosophical issue. For some comments, see Tillemans 2001: 24–6.

29. This particular way of glossing the statements found in the Perfection of Wisdom literature that *dharmas* are like illusions, stressing here the word *like* and stepping back from a literal equation of *dharmas* and hence all things with illusions, is particularly characteristic of the dGe lugs reading of Prāsaṅgika Mādhyamika. This approach would not be shared by all Tibetans, let alone all Mādhyamikas. Some others felt the dGe lugs here were too keen to avoid the ontological radicality of the teaching of emptiness, and/or too keen on the philosophical and theoretical enterprise of *establishing* things ontologically rather than concentrating simply on demolishing them in order to facilitate enlightenment through eradicating grasping attachment.
30. MK 7: 16/34 (Nāgārjuna 1977; Williams 1977); cf. also *Śūnyatāsaptati* vv. 64–73 (Lindtner 1982: 63–9).
31. That is, as Mādhyamika texts make very clear, *śūnyatā* here is an exact equivalent of *niḥsvabhāvatā*, absence of *svabhāva*.
32. Admittedly, what exactly Nāgārjuna himself meant by this has been hotly debated. But it seems unlikely that he can have meant by *dṛṣṭi* what we might call in context simply *any* philosophical or doctrinal position or viewpoint as such. One of the main Sanskrit terms for a philosophical or doctrinal position or viewpoint is *darśana*, derived from the same root as *dṛṣṭi* and hence connected with seeing. Candrakīrti uses *śūnyatādarśana* in his *Prasannapadā* – the philosophical or doctrinal viewpoint of emptiness – to describe Mādhyamika. Nāgārjuna refers a couple of times to the Mādhyamika as one who 'holds the doctrine of *śūnyatā*' (*śūnyatāvādin*; e.g. *Vigrahavyāvartanī* v. 69), which must be the same as 'one who holds the *darśana* of emptiness'. See Ruegg (1981: 2–3). On the use of *dṛṣṭi* (Pali: *diṭṭhi*) in Theravāda, see Gethin 1997 and Fuller 2005.
33. See Ruegg 1983 and Williams 1985. For a translation of the *Vigrahavyāvartanī*, see Nāgārjuna 1978. For a detailed Tibetan discussion of the 'no-thesis' issue, and a complete survey of dGe lugs Mādhyamika, see Tsong kha pa's pupil mKhas grub rje (1385–1438) in Cabezón (1992a).
34. Some such interpretation of the 'no-thesis' position would seem to be necessary in order for it to make any logical sense at all. Otherwise a literal meaning of having no thesis at all would be that the Mādhyamika is claiming to have nothing at all to say. Period. If someone says they have nothing to say (and what, otherwise, could literally having no thesis mean?), apart from the apparent contradiction, they have certainly ruled themselves out from being taken seriously (for they have given us nothing to take seriously) or any further part in discussion (for there is nothing to discuss). Cf., however, Nāgārjuna on the spiritual benefits of simply not having a thesis at all, and taking no standpoint, at *Yuktiṣaṣṭikā* 50–6. This could support the suggestion that Nāgārjuna himself may have indeed held the apparently paradoxical position of no-position. That is,

suppose all his arguments are true. (But without assertion, thesis, or position how could they be true? Cf. the logical principle that if the truth of a proposition entails its own falsehood, it must be false). Nāgārjuna may have thought that this would entail that there are no veridical arguments and no veridical theses at all, even non-intrinsically existing arguments and positions. Yet surely there can be no spiritual benefits from literally saying nothing and having nothing to say. Of course, someone can certainly as a matter of fact *refuse* to say something, for some reason or another. But that is different. The reason why in context they refuse to say something can always be explained, and indeed *must* be explained at some point for the refusal to have any meaning. Thus there are very definitely theses, assertions, at play in the refusal of utterance. Refusal of utterance is parasitic upon the utterances that give it meaning. See also on this topic Āryadeva's *Catuḥśatakakārikā*, Ch. 16. And cf., e.g., Jizang's approach to emptiness as a purely therapeutic medicine (see below) rather than some sort of philosophically arguable and defensible position. And for contrasting Tibetan approaches to these issues in Mādhyamika from that of Tsong kha pa and his tradition (and critical of it) see, e.g., Mipham in Phuntsho 2005, Go rams pa bSod nams seng ge (Gorampa Sernamsenge) in Cabezón and Dargyay 2007, or dGe 'dun chos 'phel (Gendun Chopel) (in spite of the fact that he was supposed to be a dGe lugs pa) in Lopez 2006.

35. In Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma, for example, if we could, e.g., analyse something into real parts it could not be a *dharma* and therefore it could not be an ultimate existent. On the connection in Nāgārjuna between existing with a *svabhāva*, existing independently, and being found under analysis, see Tillemans (2001: 9–11).
36. How many things *could* it be seen as, potentially? The number (for anything that exists) must be infinite, or perhaps more accurately, it is indeterminate. This (it could be alleged) shows that it cannot be intrinsically existent, as one fully real thing. Whether it is seen as one, two, three or whatever, things depends upon our practical purposes. In other words, it depends upon social, cultural and ultimately mental imputation of identity and nothing more.
37. For dGe lugs arguments in Tibet against the Self, and on the manner in which a 'person' should nevertheless be seen as existing conventionally, see, e.g., Hopkins 1983: 47–51 and Wilson 1980: esp. 46.
38. Note, therefore, a tendency in Nāgārjuna to assimilate nirvāṇa – the attainment of following the path – with emptiness, the permanent true nature of things. Rather as we saw in Chapter 2 with *prajñā*, the subjective state of mind and its objective referent tend to be equated. Later philosophical systematization in Mādhyamika endeavours to separate the nirvāṇa that comes as an attainment through following the path, from the 'natural nirvāṇa' (*prakṛtinirvāṇa*) that is another name for the emptiness of each thing.
39. On Dol po pa, and his version of the 'other-emptiness' (*gzhan stong*; pronounced 'zhendong') interpretation of Mādhyamika, see, e.g., Stearns 1999 and Hopkins 2006. On the use of Nāgārjuna's *Dharmadhātustava* in this way, see Hookham 1991: 154–6.

40. We find in Nāgārjuna (and throughout Mādhyamika) not mystical denial but rather enthusiastic application of such logical principles as non-contradiction. Mādhyamika argument depends on rigorous application of the rules of logic.
41. Note this last point. For Nāgārjuna nirvāṇa cannot be a true yet indeterminate reality, not capable of being spoken of as either existent or nonexistent. Nirvāṇa is thus for Nāgārjuna not at all some sort of absolute yet unutterable reality beyond all dualistic concepts of existence and nonexistence.
42. Note the suggestion by Tillemans (McClintock and Dreyfus 2003: 114–15), following Mark Siderits and writing in a specifically Mādhyamika context, that 'customary' might be a better translation than 'conventional' for *saṃvṛti*.
43. Note the implications of this. When the Mādhyamika says that something is empty what follows in terms of appropriate behaviour with and towards that thing is context-dependent. It does not follow as such, for example, that it may not be valued, loved, or may not be crucially important. The Buddha is empty, his teachings are empty, emptiness itself is empty. But all of these are, in different ways, important and may (again in different practical and appropriate ways) be valued. Conventionalities are constructs for practical purposes, and some purposes (like obtaining food if one is starving, or reaching enlightenment for the 'spiritually hungry') may be very important indeed. But none of these is a suitable object of grasping attachment.
44. Translated from Lindtner's edition: Atiśa 1981: 192. Atiśa was one of the most important of the transmitters of Buddhism to Tibet. He is said by Tibetans to have been a Prāsaṅgika.
45. For other Mādhyamika sources, both Svātantrika and Prāsaṅgika, that make it clear the object of negation is (the superimposition onto things by unenlightened beings of) *svabhāva*, not as such things themselves, see Tillemans 2001: 20–3. As Tillemans puts it, with reference to his later Svātantrika and Prāsaṅgika translated sources, 'refuting superimpositions (i.e. reifications of things rather than customary things themselves) is what Mādhyamika thought is essentially all about.' That Mādhyamika does not intend to teach that literally nothing exists at all is presumably apparent once the name of the school becomes established as 'Mādhyamika', the 'Middling' or 'Middle Way' school. This must have been meant to take up old Buddhist references to dependent origination (*pratītyasamutpāda*), i.e. the causal nature of things, as the middle between eternalism (*śāśvatavāda*; i.e. here, really, intrinsically, and hence permanently existing) and annihilationism (*ucchedavāda*; i.e. here, simply not existing at all). Tillemans notes, however, that whether this restriction on the range of Mādhyamika negation would apply to Nāgārjuna himself may be less clear (and there certainly are later commentators, in Tibet, for example, who do interpret Mādhyamika as negating things as such). We might add that the Perfection of Wisdom literature too sometimes suggests that things themselves are simply hallucinatory. It should be noted that Mādhyamika was widely thought of in ancient India as entailing, in fact if not intention, that nothing at all exists. It is not clear how many followers of, e.g., Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma were actually convinced

by Mādhyamika arguments. One reason why rivals considered that Mādhyamika, notwithstanding its protestations, must entail that nothing exists at all may have been its broader Abhidharma context. Mādhyamika teaches that all things, no matter what, lack *svabhāva*. In Abhidharma terms this must mean that all things are simply pragmatic conceptual constructs (i.e. each and every thing exists just as a *prajñapti*). This much appears to have been accepted by the Mādhyamika. But that would mean that absolutely everything is a construct. Since this includes absolutely everything, there is nothing left out of which things can be constructed. In other words, it is simply meaningless to speak of *absolutely everything* existing as a conceptual construct. It would entail that no construction could (conceptually) get started. Hence nothing would exist at all. Mādhyamika (it might have been felt) in fact collapses into nihilism, in spite of its intentions and in spite of its protestations to the contrary. We shall take this point up again in the next chapter, on Yogācāra. For a more developed treatment of this criticism of Mādhyamika in the context of Nāgārjuna, see Burton 1999, and for a defence of Nāgārjuna, given his rhetorical purposes in his ancient Indian context, see Walser 2005: 234–44. Tillemans joins with Paul Griffiths in suggesting that it may actually be impossible to discover what Nāgārjuna himself really meant philosophically, when read apart from his later interpreters, since Nāgārjuna's works are just too imprecise, lacking in systematic development, and terse. Hence we may simply have to accept that there have been a number of ways of interpreting Nāgārjuna, and any reasonably definitive understanding of the 'real Nāgārjuna' eludes us. For the many different ways Nāgārjuna has been read in Western scholarship (invariably reflecting whatever is the latest Western philosophical fashion), see Tuck 1990.

46. Although, bearing in mind the difficulties expressed above on 'school identities', one might add Śāntideva's *Bodhicaryāvatāra* 9: 2 (1960) and its commentaries. There are many more Indian commentaries available to this text (mainly in Tibetan translation), said by Tibetans to be Prāsaṅgika, than to the *Madhyamakāvatāra*, but its teaching on the two truths is somewhat less developed.
47. For more on Tibetan debates and approaches to the two truths, based on Candrakīrti and particularly from a dGe lugs perspective, see Newland 1992.
48. Actually, this is a bit more complicated than it appears. In a rather neglected section of the *Madhyamakāvatārabhāṣya* (on 6: 181–2) Candrakīrti notes (1970) that if by the term *svabhāva* we mean with Nāgārjuna something that is 'not contingent, nor is it dependent on another being' (MK 15: 2; Nāgārjuna 1977; Williams 1977) then there is a sense in which the actual situation of things being empty, as the true way of things (the *dharmatā*), does indeed fit this description. Candrakīrti points out that the Buddha has said (in a number of sūtras) that the *dharmatā* remains and is stable whether Buddhas occur (to tell people about it) or do not. Thus there is a sense in which the true way of things could be spoken of as a *svabhāva*. But it is clear that Candrakīrti intends here only to make the semantic point that given a bare minimal characterization of *svabhāva* the true way of things would fit that characterization. The word *svabhāva* in the light

of Nāgārjuna's minimal characterization is hence ambiguous. Tsong kha pa, commenting at a number of places on the *Madhyamakāvatārabhāṣya* here, underlines that when *svabhāva* is understood in its primary Buddhist technical sense, involving something having actual fundamental reality, Candrakīrti is not to be taken at this point as limiting the range of the Mādhyamika negation of *svabhāva*. That a state of affairs always applies is not the same as something being fundamentally real. For more on these issues in *Madhyamakāvatārabhāṣya* on 6: 181–2, see Williams 1982.

49. Thus far the Prāsaṅgika Candrakīrti. But recall that the actual existence conventionally of *svabhāvas* is said by the dGe lugs in Tibet to be a defining position of Svātantrika Mādhyamika. If this is correct, then the view of an earlier Mādhyamika like Nāgārjuna on this topic must at least be unclear and susceptible to differing interpretations.
50. At what stage on the Bodhisattva path someone starts really to perceive things that way is a matter of dispute. Generally it begins to occur from the seventh Bodhisattva stage onwards (on these stages, see Chapter 9 below). And only a Buddha so sees things that both the ultimate (emptiness) and conventionalities themselves are seen together in the very same single cognitive act.
51. In this Mādhyamika gives the rationale for, and converges with, the (magical, quicksilver) picture of the world given by, e.g., the *Prajñāpāramitā* sūtras. The fact that this is how things are, and how Buddhas – who see correctly – see things, means from a positive point of view that a Person with Power (i.e. an advanced Bodhisattva, or a Buddha) can manipulate so-called 'reality' for the benefit of others.
52. See Hopkins 1974; 1983: esp. 43–123; 1984: 134–44.
53. Note, therefore, that seeing the ultimate truth, emptiness, even when it is seen directly and in a nondual and nonconceptual manner, is not the *end* of the path to Buddhahood but – while a considerable and rare achievement – is a *relatively* early stage. For another short account of meditation on emptiness, as seen in dGe lugs sources, and how it fits with the Bodhisattva path, see Napper 1989: 19–22.
54. On MK 13: 8 (Nāgārjuna 1977; Williams 1977). See the German translation by Walleser (1912: 88). There is now an English translation of the *Zhonglun* by Bocking (1995). For Jizang, see, e.g., his *Sanlunxuanyi* (*San-lun hsüan-i*; trans. in Chan 1963: 365–8). A recent detailed study in English of Jizang on the two truths is Shih 2004. The idea that the teaching of emptiness is to be seen simply as a medicine is found in, and perhaps originates with, the relatively early Mahāyāna sūtra, the *Kāśyapaparivarta* (see, e.g., Chang 1983: 396). It is possible that Nāgārjuna is alluding to this Mahāyāna sūtra at MK 13: 8 (Nāgārjuna 1977; Williams 1977). The illness metaphor, and the Bodhisattva as a doctor, is taken up again by Āryadeva in his *Catuḥśatakakārikā* (Chs 5/8).
55. On the importance of this sūtra in China, and its influence, certainly by the time of Kumārajīva, as well as the parallels noted by Chinese scholars between this sūtra and the Daoist *Zhuangzi*, see Demiéville's 'Vimalakīrti en Chine' in Lamotte 1962 and repr. in Demiéville 1973: 347–64.

56. See Fung Yu-lan 1948: 246 and Chan 1963: 361. For Indian Mādhyamika discussions of language, silence, and nonconceptuality, see Williams 1980: esp. 23 ff., and for some Tibetan considerations Williams 1992.
57. The modern Japanese scholar Noriaki Hakamaya has argued that aversion to words and stress on ineffability is precisely a Chinese trait in Buddhism, rather than an Indian one. Hence he doubts that these trends are really Buddhism at all. See Swanson 1993: 127. For Hakamaya and the 'Critical Buddhism' movement in contemporary Japan, see below, Chapter 5. Another contemporary Japanese scholar associated with the 'Critical Buddhism' movement, Takatoshi Itō, has argued for the assimilation of indigenous Chinese ideas by Sengzhao and Jizang (Swanson 1993: 137).

Chapter 4 Yogācāra

1. For exactly which king may have been the friend of Nāgārjuna, see Walser 2005: Ch. 2.
2. Although many in Tibet itself were destroyed in the latter half of the twentieth century by the Chinese and have only fairly recently begun to recover a little of their former status. A number of the great Tibetan monasteries have been re-established by the Tibetan refugee community in India, however, where they are flourishing.
3. Although, as we shall see in the following chapter, there remains a suggestion that there may have been some sort of broader Brāhmanical ('Hindu') influence on the development within Buddhism of, e.g., the *tathāgatagarbha* ('Buddha-nature') doctrine.
4. This is a tradition that goes under a number of names, although for the tradition as a whole *Yogācāra* seems most common. For the meaning of this term see later in this chapter and the reference in note 10. Other names relate to one of its principal interests, the nature of consciousness: *Vijñānavāda* ('Doctrine of consciousness'), *Vijñaptimātratā* ('Perception (or "Representation")-only' (or 'Perception-merely')), or sometimes *Cittamātra* ('Mind-only' (or 'Mind-merely')).
5. This second subgroup could encompass both rival followers of Mahāyāna but also those who completely rejected the Mahāyāna on the basis that, e.g., the Perfection of Wisdom sūtras in their apparent ontological nihilism cannot be the word of the Buddha.
6. Frauwallner (1951a) has argued that there were in fact two Vasubandhus. The author of the *Abhidharmakośa* (1970–3) was not the same Vasubandhu as Asaṅga's brother. Against this, Jaini (1958) has pointed out on the basis of the *Abhidharmadīpa* that the author of the *Abhidharmakośa* may well have subsequently converted to the Mahāyāna. There need not necessarily be a contradiction here. Schmithausen has argued that the *Viṃśatikā* and *Triṃśikā* differ from other works attributed to Vasubandhu, and show the Sautrāntika origins of their author. The author of the *Abhidharmakośa* was also probably a Sautrāntika. It is therefore reasonable to suggest that the author of the *Abhidharmakośa* became a Mahāyānist, while at the same time considering it at least plausible with Frauwallner that this is a different Vasubandhu from the brother of Asaṅga, who may have also converted to Mahāyāna (see Schmithausen 1967). For a recent survey of the

material, and argument that the author of the *Abhidharmakośa* is quite possibly the same person as the author of, e.g., the *Viṃśatikā* and *Triṃśikā*, see Skilling 2000. For a suggestion that the Mahāyānist Vasubandhu not only wrote the *Abhidharmakośa* (1970–3), but may have already owed allegiance to Yogācāra at the time of writing, see Kritzer 1993. We simply lack the information at the moment to settle conclusively the issue of one or multiple Vasubandhus.

7. For detailed summaries of these texts, and many others, see Potter 1999. Subsequent volumes of this valuable series summarize *inter alia* further Mādhyamika and Yogācāra philosophical works.
8. Indeed, it is arguable that in India forms of Yogācāra, once it had emerged, almost always were the dominant Mahāyāna philosophical position. But note that it is not always possible to pigeon-hole Indian Buddhist treatises neatly into either Mādhyamika or Yogācāra as classically and paradigmatically understood. Interest in exclusive doctrinal school identity may have been less widespread in India (particularly, perhaps, among those Mahāyānists whose primary interest was in facilitating their meditation experience in terms of the Bodhisattva path) than is sometimes assumed. We shall meet the same issue again in the following chapter, where questions of 'Mādhyamika or Yogācāra school identity' for the *tathāgatagarbha* tradition, at least in its origins, may be unhelpful.
9. The study of these important epistemologists is complex and philosophically demanding. As far as the treatment of Mahāyāna as such, and Yogācāra in particular, for our purposes here it would not add very much to the others considered in this chapter. I shall therefore pass over Dignāga and Dharmakīrti in all but silence. For further study of Dharmakīrti one could begin with Dunne 2004. On the spiritual significance of the Buddhist epistemologists, see Steinkellner 1982. For a comparative philosophical study of the debates on the theme of perception between the Buddhist epistemologists and their Hindu rivals, see Matilal 1986. On the Yogācāra side of Dignāga and Dharmakīrti's thought see Dreyfus and Lindtner 1989. On the epistemological tradition particularly in Tibet, see Dreyfus 1997b.
10. On the general meaning of this term in Buddhism, see Silk 2000.
11. On later distinctions in China and Japan (including among modern Japanese Buddhologists) between a 'Mind-only' (*Weixin* = *Cittamātra*) school and a 'Consciousness-only' (*Weishi* = *Vijñānamātra* or *Vijñaptimātra*) school, with the former (= in fact more or less Zen and Huayan, or Hua-yen) superior to the latter (= the Faxiang school, developed by Xuanzang's followers on the basis of the *Chengweishilun*), see Lai 1977. In origin this distinction relates to the Chinese appropriation of the Buddha-nature (*tathāgatagarbha*) teachings, and its linkage with Yogācāra. See below for the influence of, e.g., Paramārtha on this trend. There is no such systematic distinction in India and Tibet. *Mātra* could also be translated as 'merely', or with Schmithausen 2005 as 'nothing but', making, e.g., the Sanskrit expression *cittamātra* quite explicit as (the school of) 'Nothing but Mind'. However, in a lengthy and philosophically-sophisticated recent study of Yogācāra philosophy, based on the *Chengweishilun*, Dan Lusthaus argues (2002: 5–6;

italics original) that Yogācāra does not hold 'that consciousness itself is *ultimately* real (*paramārtha-sat*), much less the only reality. . . . Thus the key Yogācāric phrase *vijñaptimātra* does not mean (as it is often touted in scholarly literature) that "consciousness alone exists," but rather that "all our efforts to get beyond ourselves are nothing but projections of our consciousness." Yogācārins [i.e. Yogācāras, followers of Yogācāra] treat the term *vijñaptimātra* as an epistemic caution, not an ontological pronouncement'. For Lusthaus Yogācāra does not deny the real existence of matter independently of consciousness. This is not the place to detail disagreements with Lusthaus's approach, which shows a creative philosophical (re)interpretation that does not (to my mind) fully convince as a reading of what Yogācāra texts say. Lambert Schmithausen has reviewed Lusthaus's book at length in a monograph (2005), and he argues that Lusthaus's reading and translation of key passages are simply not philologically supportable. Schmithausen (2005: 9–10) observes that 'Yogācāra thought has traditionally been understood as advocating the epistemological position that mind, or consciousness, does not . . . perceive or cognize anything outside itself, but rather cognizes only its own image of an object, and as propounding the ontological position that there are no entities, especially no material entities, apart from consciousness. . . . This understanding was not invented by modern scholars but is in line with works of medieval Indian (and Tibetan) authors, both non-Buddhist and Buddhist.' Yogācāra sources do indeed state that external matter simply does not exist, and what seems to be matter is merely the transformation of consciousness (e.g. from the *Chengweishilun* itself; Schmithausen 2005: 24; cf. 42). Moreover Schmithausen shows in passing (*ibid.*: 20–1, n. 28) that Lusthaus's suggestion that the *tathatā*, 'thusness', the true nature of things, is for the *Chengweishilun* simply a conceptual construct and hence not truly existent (thus making Yogācāra ontologically no different here from Mādhyamika), is also unconvincing. He points out (*ibid.*: 10) that the revision of this 'traditional interpretation' of Yogācāra has arisen among scholars 'mainly from the Anglo-Saxon cultural sphere'. But he concludes (*ibid.*: 49) that, while not always found in fully-fledged form, the traditional understanding has not been undermined, and indeed he expresses his 'amazement at the emotional vehemence of their [i.e. the modern mainly Anglo-Saxon scholars'] criticism'. 'Is it', Schmithausen continues, 'merely because Yogācāra thought as traditionally understood seems so counter-intuitive to modern Western common-sense that some scholars think they must "defend" the Yogācāras against such an understanding? But isn't this the same mode of procedure that scholars who worked when idealism was the dominant strand in Western philosophy are criticized for, viz. reading the presuppositions of one's own time and milieu into the old texts? It may be difficult to avoid doing this completely, but one can at least try one's best to understand the texts from within . . . and to make sense of them on their own premises.' Perhaps the wish to avoid the term 'idealism' used of Yogācāra largely reflects the (erroneous) feeling that idealism is out of fashion in current Western philosophy. It is possible also that the interpreters Schmithausen criticizes, enthusiastic sometimes themselves for Buddhism in general and for Yogācāra

(understood in their way) in particular, are sensitive to the dangers of solipsism in the traditional way of reading Yogācāra, notwithstanding the Yogācāra attempt to avoid the charge (on Yogācāra and solipsism, see, e.g., Wood 1991, Schmithausen 2005: 52 and below). Since it seems to me the evidence for a large-scale revision of the traditional interpretation of Yogācāra is far from convincing, let alone overwhelming, the present chapter follows that traditional interpretation. For a one-page statement of that traditional interpretation, see Schmithausen 1973a (2005b repr.: 243–4). Still, Lusthaus's work does draw attention to the complexity of Yogācāra interpretation, and as a creative (and arguably philosophically more plausible) reading of the Yogācāra position it is particularly useful. Students should be aware of this strand of creative rereading of Yogācāra philosophy, particularly (although by no means exclusively) in North American Buddhology. For a summary of Lusthaus's views on Yogācāra, see Lusthaus 2004a and 2004b.

12. Schmithausen 1973a (2005b repr.: 249–50) suggests that this was the first Buddhist text to enunciate 'the thesis of universal idealism' and to use the expression *cittamātra* for it.
13. Recall here the possible visionary origins of the Mahāyāna and the need to justify those origins.
14. Or 'only [an] experience' (*vijñaptimātra*); for this expression, see Hall 1986. On this section of the *Saṃdhinirmocana Sūtra*, its relationship to the early Yogācāra view of the spiritual path and how it differs from some preceding texts of the Yogācāra, see Schmithausen 2007: 237 ff.
15. Schmithausen's point has been criticized, however, in an important paper by Robert Sharf (1995b; 2005b repr.: 262–3). Sharf does not find any evidence of doctrinal developments based specifically on reflection on first-hand meditative experiences in the material Schmithausen cites. Sharf wishes to play down the connection between Buddhist philosophy in general, and its path structures in particular, and meditative experience. They are often highly schematized, even scholastic, structures driven by the needs of coherent system-building based on scriptural materials and should not be thought of, Sharf argues, as descriptions of or derived from direct and perhaps unmediated personal mystical experiences attained in meditative trance. In discussing contemporary Japanese contributions on the origins of the *ālayavijñāna* that bear some similarity to his approach in this respect, Schmithausen (1987: 182) has rather clarified or nuanced his views on the influence ('only indirectly') of religious experience on the evolution of doctrine.
16. This point is well made by a contemporary Tibetan lama, Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso (1986: 39–40), and we shall return to it in Chapter 6. For a very clear classical source see, e.g., Kambala's *Ālokamālā* in Lindtner 1985: 207–9.
17. Sanskrit: *trisvabhāva*. The word '*svabhāva*' here need not be taken to mean intrinsic or inherent *existence*, as it does for the Mādhyamika, although that is not to say that the word is never used for intrinsic existence in Yogācāra.
18. Note that this is the *causal flow*. It is made up of momentary events, and the flow is expressed in terms of dependent origination (*pratītyasamutpāda*), at least as far as saṃsāra is concerned. This enables Yogācāra to place to the fore the centrality of the

basic Buddhist doctrine of *pratītyasamutpāda* and to adopt and adapt the Abhidharma model of momentary *dharmas* as an analysis of experience when properly understood within the broader Yogācāra framework (i.e. all *dharmas* can be explained in terms of just perceptions or experiences, or *vijñapti*). A specifically Yogācāra version of the Abhidharma analysis is found in Asaṅga's *Abhidharmasamuccaya* (1971).

19. See here the translation of the *Yogācārabhūmi* chapter on Reality by Willis (1979: 160 ff.; without necessarily following Willis in all her interpretation); cf. Thurman (1984: 210 ff.) for Tsong kha pa and the Sanskrit texts.
20. Note that it is precisely on the issue of the real existence of the dependent nature that fierce disagreements occurred between Mādhyamika and Yogācāra. It is here that the essential ontological difference between the two philosophical schools exists. See the translated material in Hirabayashi and Iida 1977.
21. *Mahāyānasaṃgraha* 2: 18 (Asaṅga 1938) plus commentaries; dKon mchog 'jigs med dbang po, in Sopa and Hopkins 1976: 113; cf. Nagao 1991: Ch. 6, 71–2 and Urban and Griffiths 1994: 17–21. It might be worth underlining all this, since students new to Yogācāra sometimes get a little confused. Their confusion is not helped by ambiguity sometimes found in the sources themselves. The perfected nature is the highest of the Three Natures *soteriologically*, since it is what has to be known for liberation. In Indian Yogācāra it is frequently spoken of as a pure absence, a negation, the absence of the conceptualized (constructed) nature in the dependent nature. This enables Yogācāra to harmonize with the negativism of the Perfection of Wisdom literature. But the highest of the Three Natures *ontologically* is the flow of perceptions and hence strictly this is the dependent nature, either as tainted in the unenlightened person or the same substantial 'thing' as purified in one who is enlightened. This is a positive 'mentalistic thing', i.e. an undeniable and thus really existent (flow of) Mind, or Consciousness. Hence for Yogācāra here what is ontologically the highest, that is, the most really existent, is not in itself what is soteriologically the highest, i.e. the most important thing to be cognized. Strictly speaking, therefore, if one is to be consistent it would not be right to refer to the perfected nature as *itself* the nondual flow of pure consciousness (i.e. a positive reality). However, we have seen a number of times already a tendency in Buddhist thought (perhaps connected with the nature of meditative experience) to refer to the mind that cognizes *X* as *X* itself. Hence the state of mind (in fact, effectively the purified dependent nature, as a state of mind, of course, a positive thing) that cognizes directly, nonconceptually, irrevocably the perfected nature – 'how it really is', the ultimate truth, emptiness, *tathatā* ('thusness'), that is, the absence of the conceptualized nature in the dependent nature (as an absence, of course a negative thing) – can sometimes come to be spoken of or suggested as *itself* the perfected nature. Thus the perfected nature is itself referred to as the nondual nonconceptual consciousness of an enlightened person. This tendency may have been exacerbated by an ancient Buddhist tradition of referring to one particular state of mind achieved in advanced meditation as a 'cessation' (*nirodha*). The state of mind was hence thought of as in some sense itself an 'absence'. Moreover

in Yogācāra the perfected nature, as an absence, is taken to entail the real (really real) existence of the dependent nature as its basis. Hence the perfected nature as the soteriological 'ultimate truth' is closely bound up with the existence of the dependent nature (and particularly the purified dependent nature) as the ontological ultimate truth. This tendency may also have contributed to trends that gave rise to the *tathāgatagarbha* approach (see following chapter, and also Paramārtha below; for a much later Tibetan parallel, seeing the perfected nature as the true ultimate reality – again related to the *tathāgatagarbha* – see Mathes 2000). The ontological centrality of the dependent nature in the classical scheme of the Three Natures is brought out well in an interesting discussion by Nagao (1991: Ch. 6). For a detailed study of the Three Natures in the context of Indian Buddhism, see Boquist 1993.

22. On what remains in emptiness, see Nagao 1991: 53 ff. As Nagao comments (*ibid.*: 54), '[p]erhaps one should understand this as an ultimate reality that is never denied, not even in the extremity of radical negation; it is, for instance, similar to the situation in which one cannot negate the fact that one is negating. It is affirmation found in the midst of negation, and it is true existence because it is found in negation'. For a sequel to Nagao's paper, taking the appreciation of what remains in emptiness further (on the '*kalpa*' terms, see pp. 9–15, and the existence of *abhūtaparikalpa*, pp. 12–13) and also raising some interesting questions about what it would be like to experience as a Buddha given what the texts (specifically, the *Madhyāntavibhāga*-corpus) say, see Urban and Griffiths 1994.
23. *Madhyāntavibhāga* 1: 6 (Maitreyanātha 1937); *Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra* 11: 40 (Maitreyanatha 1970). That 'what remains in emptiness' is the dependent nature is also stated by Nagao (1991: 55), who observes that this idea was a subject of attack by later Mādhyamikas.
24. There is sometimes a suggestion among contemporary scholars (e.g. Lusthaus, above) that Yogācāra should not be seen as an ontology but rather as an epistemology. For this reason, again, it is not an idealism. I disagree. It seems to me that a systematic distinction between epistemology and ontology would have made little or no sense in ancient India (see Schmithausen 2005: 24, n. 34 for a specific example with reference to the important word *artha*). They are two sides of the same coin. Certainly the Yogācāra tradition is concerned with experiences and perceptions. It does maintain that all we know of is a flow of perceptions. Nevertheless, as we have seen this flow of experiences *exists* with the fullest type of existence available. It exists (explicitly in at least some major classical readings of Yogācāra) as a *dravya* (as a 'primary existent', a 'substance'), and it exists with *svabhāva*. It has, according to the Tibetan translation of Wŏnch'uk's *Saṃdhinirmocana* commentary, *yang dag par yod pa*, i.e. really real existence (Hirabayashi and Iida 1977: 353, 360). It thus contrasts radically with the Mādhyamika claim that there simply are no *dravyas* at all, and all are merely conceptual constructs (all exists simply as a *prajñapti*, the binary opposite of a *dravya*). Were the flow of experiences not to exist in this fundamental way then, as we have seen, for Yogācāra (in disagreement

with the Mādhyamika) quite simply everything would be a conceptual construct (a *prajñapti*) and there would hence be nothing at all. See here the very clear controversies on just this issue between, e.g., Bhāvaviveka as Mādhyamika, and Dharmapāla or Wŏnch'uk as Yogācāras, in Hirabayashi and Iida 1977.

25. For a clear introduction to Vasubandhu's arguments in the *Viṃśatikā* in the context of the critique of 'realist' Indian philosophies, Buddhist and Hindu, see Hattori 1988.
26. The ontological differences between Mādhyamika and Yogācāra are shown also in their very different uses made of the dream simile. In Yogācāra the dream simile is used to show how experiences can occur without there being anything external to the cognizing mind. In Mādhyamika *all things* are said to be 'like a dream', including mind itself. That is, they are not truly real. The dream simile is not used to make a distinction between things (the mind contrasted with external objects) in the way it is in Yogācāra. There is no specific use of the dream simile when applied to things in Mādhyamika (as there is in Yogācāra) that is different from their use of, e.g., similes of illusion, a mirage, echo, image of the moon in water etc. See Hattori 1982. Hattori points out that the Mādhyamikas Bhāvaviveka and Candrakīrti specifically reject (in different ways) this Yogācāra appeal to the dream simile as defence for their distinctive ('idealistic') position.
27. The point that without an object mind does not exist is also made at length in the *Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra* 6: 6–10 (Maitreyanātha 1970) and repeated in the *Mahāyānasaṃgraha* 3: 18 (Asaṅga 1938).
28. This stage of meditation is, according to Sthiramati, that of the Bodhisattva's 'path of seeing' (*darśanamārga*).
29. Sthiramati 1937: 22–3; Friedmann's translation slightly modified.
30. The expression *dharmadhātu* refers in general to all things, as a realm of experience. More specifically in Mahāyāna it is frequently used to refer to all things as seen and experienced by one who apprehends correctly, such as a Buddha.
31. See also Urban and Griffiths 1994: 20. Note that the assertion found in some circles nowadays that finally, after a Yogācāra-type analysis, mind itself as such has no greater reality than anything else is, of course, an assertion of Śāntarakṣita and the so-called 'Yogācāra-Svātantrika Mādhyamika'. If *this* is ultimately the Yogācāra position then indeed there is no final difference between Yogācāra and Mādhyamika. But, e.g., Śāntarakṣita thought there was, for he criticizes Yogācāra in his *Madhyamakālaṃkāra*. So did Bhāvaviveka, Śāntideva and Candrakīrti, for they all criticize Yogācāra stridently and at length. As Bhāvaviveka says, if the dependent nature lacks intrinsic existence (*svabhāva*) then our (Mādhyamika) position is established (Hirabayashi and Iida 1977: 349). Bhāvaviveka clearly thinks he would have won some sort of debate. Yogācāra sources, too, criticize a position which looks suspiciously like that of the Mādhyamika. A good summary of the arguments can be found in translated material in Hirabayashi and Iida 1977. All Tibetan schools are united (a rare occurrence in doctrine) on the fact that Yogācāra teaches the real existence of mind as a basis for construction, and differs in

this respect from Mādhyamika. The notion that there is no fundamental difference between Mādhyamika and Yogācāra, and that, e.g., Bhāvaviveka and Dharmapāla were arguing at cross-purposes, appears to have taken nearly two millennia to be realized.

32. Literally 'storehouse consciousness', rendered into Tibetan as the 'consciousness which is the substratum of all' (*kun gzhi rnam shes*).
33. This is said to be an 'innate' or 'inborn' (*sahaja*) conception of Self. See Schmithausen 2005: 29.
34. Lindtner 1985: 136. The primal classical Yogācāra source for seeds and the substratum consciousness is Vasubandhu's *Triṃśikābhāṣya* on 2cd. The passage is conveniently translated in, e.g., Griffiths 1992: 118–19.
35. At least in origin, this may have been one of the most important functions of the concept of the *ālayavijñāna*. Another, related to this, may have been the need for a level of 'unconscious' consciousness to serve as the link preserving personal identity (and life) in situations of apparent unconsciousness (or obvious absence of the normal operation of consciousness), as occurs, for example, in the advanced meditative state known as the 'attainment of cessation' (*nirodhasamāpatti*), hence allowing the meditator to emerge from that state rather than dying. Of course, karma and karmic responsibility were central to Buddhism from the beginning. As Buddhist philosophy developed it stressed more and more the flux and impermanence, until in the various Abhidharma traditions the emphasis was on the momentary nature of most of reality. Problems involved in retaining personal identity in the face of momentariness led to a tension between karmic responsibility and the ontology of momentariness. Given the Abhidharmic emphasis on consciousness and experience as a flow of momentary or near-momentary events, the *ālayavijñāna* in large part evolved out of attempts to impose at some level of consciousness a unifying element that might attempt to answer issues of identity, and hence karmic responsibility and justice, across one lifetime and multiple lifetimes (cf. Schmithausen 1987: Ch. 3). Karmic seeds laid down in one *ālayavijñāna* produce karmic fruition out of the same *ālayavijñāna*. Hence responsibility and justice is preserved – karmic results pertain to the same 'person' who did the deeds. Thus, to use spatial imagery, the *ālayavijñāna* can be seen horizontally as an attempt to provide some sort of 'personal' identity in order to explain adequately karmic causation and recompense, and vertically as an attempt to explain the 'emergence' of the world as both a personal life-world but also an intersubjective world on a basis broadly of a form of idealism, while at the same time avoiding solipsism. As such, the *ālayavijñāna* is part of a complex and sophisticated multilayered account of the phenomenology of unenlightened consciousness on a not-Self, momentary, flux-based, effectively idealist foundation. It is not *in itself* (*qua ālayavijñāna*) part of a discussion of ontology. On the background to the notion of the *ālayavijñāna* in the Abhidharma and its analysis of consciousness, and its role in the Yogācāra phenomenology of consciousness, see Waldron 2003. For Schmithausen (1987) these issues show that in origin the *ālayavijñāna* was a response to various pan-Buddhist Abhidharma-type problems and not in itself a specifically 'Mahāyāna' matter.

36. This is the 'world-receptacle' or 'container-world' (Schmithausen 2005: 35–8, from *Chengweishilun*, Hsüan-tsang 1973: 145 ff.; Cook 1999: 64 ff.; cf. Griffiths 1986: 91ff.). The intersubjective world includes, of course, the physical bodies of sentient beings that are experienced by more than one person. The *Chengweishilun* observes that '[b]ecause of the power of the maturation of common seeds, consciousness evolves into the apparent existence of other beings. If this were not so, one would not experience other people' (Cook 1999: 66).
37. Nevertheless, as Schmithausen (1973a; 2005b repr.: 244) puts it, 'The objective contents of this *ālayavijñāna* consists of a mental image of the whole world and is determined by the former good and bad deeds (*karman*) of the respective living beings. Thus, the whole world, especially the outer world, is only a subjective mental production of each living being. Our conviction to live in one and the same world is therefore merely an imagination based on the fact that there are certain common features in our *karman* which cause our *ālayavijñānas* to produce *similar* mental images of the outer world.' Solipsism (like systematic scepticism) is generally considered to be an impossible philosophical position to justify, but a rather difficult one conclusively to refute. Religiously (as Schmithausen 2005: 52 points out) it would be fatal for the Mahāyāna project of acting for the welfare of all sentient beings since there would exist no sentient beings apart from oneself. Here we can see how Yogācāra seeks to implicate a plurality of consciousnesses in a complex web of causal interaction, particularly through implicating the substratum consciousnesses in responsibility for an intersubjective world. The common world is not created solely through my *fiat*, on any level of my mind, but through an interplay between seeds in multiple substratum consciousnesses, resulting at least in part from common interactions in the past throughout all eternity. Readers interested in philosophical criticism, however, might like to consider whether such an approach can finally avoid solipsism. 'One's own mind' here would mean the mind of the person one is. Solipsism would not be overcome *simply* by pointing out that for Yogācāra the Self is a false construct, part of the constructed nature. The issue is that of the existence of other consciousness-streams than the one currently and indubitably experiencing in a first-person manner. How, for example, can we know on Yogācāra grounds that there *are* other consciousnesses? This is an issue discussed in some Yogācāra works, particularly within the epistemological tradition of Dignāga and Dharmakīrti (such as Dharmakīrti's *Saṃtānāntarasiddhi*, the 'Proof of Other [Mental] Continua'). And why (philosophically, rather than spiritually) should other consciousnesses be needed? Moreover, doesn't talk about common interactions in the past between sentient beings determining common seeds in a multiplicity of substratum consciousnesses presuppose what it sets out to prove, since the question at issue is how on Yogācāra principles there can actually *be* common interactions between a multiplicity of consciousnesses? If Yogācāra is right, it might be argued, there may be (my own) experiences, but how can there genuinely be common interactions between different continua of experiences? What grounds do I have for thinking that all my experiences of so-called 'other persons', including

other minds, are anything more than the play of my own experiences and nothing else? Indeed, even if Yogācāra avoids solipsism and other minds are accepted, it is arguable that on Yogācāra grounds each person is a monad locked into a world of their own conscious experiences and nothing more. For some further philosophical reflections and criticism, see Wood, who points out (1991: xiii) that if a Buddha knows other minds directly, and a Buddha's cognition is nondual (what he cognizes is of the same nondual consciousness as *his own* mind), then to what extent can one say that for a Buddha there *are* other minds? And if there are not other minds for a Buddha, then finally – remembering that by definition how a Buddha sees is true with no admixture of falsehood – other minds simply do not exist. In that case, it might be argued, *notwithstanding Yogācāra wishes to the contrary*, we would end up with just one mind – a (or the) Buddha's mind – in final reality. Hence the *ālayavijñāna* pluralism of minds would collapse into a form of mentalistic monism. But this is a position that might not be unwelcome in some other and later Buddhist traditions, particularly those associated with Buddha-nature Absolutism.

38. For a study of this theme in the *Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra*, and a suggestion on how it is to be interpreted, see D'Amato 2003.
39. On the special role of consciousness as 'life bearer' in the Pali Canon, descending into the womb and leaving the body at death, linking one life with the next (and hence bearing the karmic traces that carry from one life to the next), see Langer 2001.
40. In *this* respect it is exactly analogous to the Aristotelian and medieval concept of the 'soul', as the name we give to that which gives life to the body. It can thus be very misleading to speak of the Buddhist not-Self doctrine as denying the *soul*.
41. *Triṃśikā* v. 5 (Vasubandhu 1984); the Tibetan, however, has 'reverses'. Cf. Wayman and Wayman in *Śrīmālādevīsiṃhanāda Sūtra* 1974: 53; and Wayman 1984: 330. As an account of how unenlightened consciousness works in terms of habitual behavioural patterns the *ālayavijñāna*, as Waldron observes, is the main obstacle to enlightenment (2003: 5). That explains why early Yogācāra sources tend to emphasize the cessation of the *ālayavijñāna* at enlightenment. The continuation of consciousness itself in the case of an enlightened person, given the Yogācāra ontology of consciousness, is quite another issue.
42. On the early development of the concept of the *ālayavijñāna*, and material that does indeed suggest its simple cessation, see Schmithausen (1987: esp. 197–207). Schmithausen includes (*ibid*.: 144–93) a detailed discussion of Japanese researches (with conclusions variant to his own) otherwise unavailable to those who do not read Japanese on the origins of the *ālayavijñāna*.
43. For Paramārtha, see Paul 1984. Cf. Demiéville 1973: 38 ff.; Ruegg 1969: Ch. 5; and Frauwallner 1951b: 637 ff. For Dharmapāla and the *Chengweishilun* see, e.g., Hsüan-tsang 1973: 179–85; Cook 1999: 78–81.
44. Known in Chinese as Yuance (Yuan-ts'ő); in Tibetan as Wen tshegs (or tshig).
45. There are parallels here within Indian Buddhism. See, for example, Ratnākaraśānti (*c*. eleventh century), otherwise known as the tantric yogin Śānti pa, who combines this with a 'without form' (*q.v.*) viewpoint (Kajiyama 1965: 34 ff.).

46. The linkage of Yogācāra doctrines with the Buddha-nature (*tathāgatagarbha*) teachings that were so popular in China had occurred already in China prior to the arrival of Paramārtha, and was the focus of various disputes in Yogācāra interpretation. It is said that it was partly to settle these disputes that Xuanzang travelled to India to try and find for himself an authoritative understanding of Yogācāra. The influence of a Yogācāra-*tathāgatagarbha* hybrid approach has continued in East Asian Buddhism to the present day. There is a view, well known in Japanese scholarship, which would argue on this basis that there were two distinct streams of Yogācāra interpretation that were transmitted from India to East Asia (although unknown, as such, in Tibet). The one is associated (although not exclusively) with Paramārtha and the other with Dharmapāla and Xuanzang. For a summary in English, see Ueda 1967. Ueda argues that the 'Paramārtha tradition' is closer to that of Maitreya, Asaṅga and Vasubandhu, and also corresponds with the position of Sthiramati. Dharmapāla innovated in his interpretation of Yogācāra, making it for example more 'idealist' than was originally the case (through a rather literal interpretation of the 'transformation of consciousness', or *vijñānapariṇāma*). But the issue of who was truer to Yogācāra origins is complicated. If taken as an overall assessment of Paramārtha's understanding of Yogācāra, Ueda's argument would nowadays be thought to be controversial, particularly as scholars are more and more aware of 'innovations' Paramārtha seems to have introduced into his translations of Yogācāra works. These innovations were, e.g., associated with harmonizing Yogācāra with a form of 'Buddha-nature Absolutism' that was also found to be particularly congenial in East Asia (see de Jong 1979: 584, reviewing Takasaki; Grosnick 1989: 79–83; 86). Cf. here Lai, who sees Xuanzang as 'inheriting the more Indian position' (1977: 2005b repr.: 168). Note, incidentally, that in China Paramārtha's new Yogācāra translations were apparently initially suppressed by Buddhist monks in Nanking, perhaps because of those monks' Perfection of Wisdom and Mādhyamika affiliation (Grosnick 1989: 85).
47. On the Mādhyamika criticism of this argument in, e.g., Śāntideva, and its Tibetan interpretation, see Williams 1998a. But not all Mādhyamikas opposed the reflexivity of consciousness (also known as *svasaṃvedana*). It is accepted by, e.g., Śāntarakṣita and his so-called 'Yogācāra-Svātantrika' tradition.
48. Although chronologically apparently the earliest mention of the actual expression *sākārajñānavāda* ('doctrine of awareness having form') seems to be by Śāntarakṣita, who is very likely later than Dharmapāla and Sthiramati (Hattori 1998; 2005b repr.: 62). See Kajiyama (1965; 2005b repr.) and Kajiyama's contribution to Kiyota (1978b) and for a Tibetan account of the dispute, Sopa and Hopkins ('true aspect and false aspect'; 1976: 107–11). Kajiyama (1965; 2005b repr.: 123) supports a connection between the disputes of Dharmapāla and Sthiramati and the 'with form/without form' debate. See also Griffiths 1990, esp. section 5. 'Form' (*ākāra*), 'phenomenological content', broadly the experiential content of experiences, may often here be something like 'image' or sense-datum, and as such should not be confused with '[physical] form' (*rūpa*) in, e.g., the five aggregates (*skandhas*) or Abhidharma. On the meanings of *ākāra*, see Griffiths 1990.

49. Hattori 1988; 2005b repr.: 63 rather suggests that all Yogācāra is 'with form', but according to Dreyfus and Lindtner 1989: 32, Vasubandhu's position is 'without form'. Dignāga and Dharmakīrti adopt a 'with-form' perspective.
50. Talk here is of the form of the *object*, but one should remember that in Yogācāra this is largely shorthand for 'subject and object', since both are in Yogācāra on the same level. Subject and object as experienced by unenlightened people are conceptual constructs fabricated out of of the nondual flow of experiences.
51. Note also that since how a Buddha perceives is axiomatically correct, the final truth, without any falsehood, so for a 'without-form' perspective finally there exists only ultimate radiant pure nonconceptual consciousness. This position is indeed very close to the view of Paramārtha and certain interpretations of the Buddha-nature. Consciousness really taking the form of blue, or indeed of anything else, would be seen as a stain on its immaculate purity and impugning its absolute nature. On the concept of pure consciousness in Indian Buddhism, see the chapter by Paul Griffiths in Forman 1990.
52. Cf. here the position of the *Chengweishilun* and presumably therefore Dharmapāla's contrasting view, in Schmithausen 2005: 54–5. Here a Buddha sees multiplicity structured as in unenlightened awareness, but he sees the variety of things correctly, as in itself illusory and simply the play of nondual consciousness. As Schmithausen points out (*ibid.*: 56) this includes a Buddha's vision of glorious pure Buddha Fields and pure bodies, all seen and known to be nothing more than the play of consciousness. The fact that all of so-called 'reality' is actually nothing more than the play of (his own) consciousness explains how it is that it can be transformed through spiritual practice (i.e. meditation) into a sublime pure (Buddha) world. Recall here the possible visionary meditative context of the origins of Yogācāra and indeed Mahāyāna generally. It is arguable that Yogācāra philosophy is itself the philosophy of the visionary experience of meditators, perhaps related in some way to the world of the forest hermits who were so influential on the rise of Mahāyāna. For what appears to be the same approach as Dharmapāla, see Kambala's *Ālokamālā* in Lindtner 1985 (210–11; cf. 178 ff., esp. 180, v. 177). The association of Mahāyāna principles (i.e. here Yogācāra *cittamātra*), but not other systems, with the ability of advanced Bodhisattvas to do miracles is mentioned specifically in *Ālokamālā* vv. 260–2. We should note in passing an interesting objection (Lindtner 1985: 182) in Kambala's work made by an opponent: 'If all is empty then exertion in the Dharma (or, with the Tibetan, "in virtue") is pointless.' To which Kambala's reply is that 'For one to whom [all is] empty applies, it is true that [exertion] is pointless. But this is because he has already achieved the point!' The commentary to Kambala's text makes it clear that this should not be taken quietistically however, but refers to dwelling in emptiness at a very advanced stage of the Bodhisattva path (the eighth stage and beyond), a stage that is achieved through the accumulation of vast merit through virtuous deeds. And in the next verses Kambala notes that because all is empty it also makes no sense for the Bodhisattva to engage in *evil* deeds. In this he differs from someone

who does not see emptiness, but wallows in conceptual constructs. For *that* person, the normal (karmic) cause/effect structure of saṃsāra applies and hence serves to discourage from evil.

53. For some interesting if brief critical reflections, but based particularly on earlier classical Indian Yogācāra sources that do not appear to support a literal 'without-form' position (i.e. earlier classical Yogācāra, inasmuch as it articulated such a distinction, that takes some time to emerge in Yogācāra, appears to hold a broadly 'with form' perspective), see Urban and Griffiths 1994, and also Griffiths 1990. For context and broader issues, see also Griffiths 1994. Griffiths wants to argue that given the description of what is involved in these Yogācāra sources a Buddha would appear to be severely limited in his ability to know things. He could not know, e.g., what it is like to be a subject confronting an object, what it is to have volitions, and a Buddha cannot have (Griffiths wants to argue) anticipations or memories (this has implications in terms of, e.g., a Buddha's alleged ability to remember his previous lives). For a discussion of memory in Yogācāra, and a brief reflection on its applicability or otherwise to Buddhas, see Griffiths 1992. This picks up earlier critical observations, but not specific to Yogācāra, in Griffiths 1989. Hence a Buddha could not be literally omniscient. A Buddha would thus appear to be similarly limited in his ability to interact with, and hence to act to benefit, others. That a Buddha could not be literally omniscient would clearly be the case on a 'without-form' position too, assuming 'without form' means what it says. The possession of omniscience by definition must involve one's consciousness possessing some sort of phenomenological content ('form'). For some further philosophical problems and reflections on what it might be like to be enlightened, or a Buddha, this time within a broader context in Buddhist philosophy and with particular reference to experiencing without a Self, see Tillemans 1996 (cf. also Williams 1998b: Ch. 5).

Chapter 5 The Tathāgatagarbha

1. Indeed, I suspect that the idea of the *tathāgatagarbha* did not develop in India in conceptually the same contexts as led to the development of the schools of Mādhyamika and Yogācāra. While these schools may have developed in part in circles interested in Abhidharma analysis and its limits, with topics of ontology and psychology to the fore, the *tathāgatagarbha* seems to be an issue of realizing one's spiritual potential, exhortation and encouragement rather than philosophical analysis (even where the latter incorporates insight meditation). As I have said elsewhere (Williams, with Tribe 2000: 162), the context for developing the *tathāgatagarbha* 'is perhaps the world of advocating the supremacy of the Mahāyāna against rival "lower" paths, for if the *tathāgatagarbha* – the Buddha-nature – is in all sentient beings, all sentient beings should, and presumably in the end will, follow the path to a supreme Buddhahood. This path will leave the arhats and pratyekabuddhas far behind. Issues of the ontological status of the *tathāgatagarbha* developed later'. But for the possibility that perhaps meditative

experience also contributed to the notion of the *tathāgatagarbha*, see the section on contemporary Thai debates, below.

2. Grosnick 2004. See Frauwallner 1956: 255 for the mid-third century; for a century later than that, see Takasaki 1966: 61. Zimmermann 2002: 12 seems to accept a fourth-century date.
3. Cf. de Jong 1979: 584, reviewing Takasaki. Fazang was no doubt not the first to do so. We find a move in that direction already being suggested by Daosheng in the early fifth century (Lai 1982: 140). On a modern Japanese criticism of the idea that this represents Indian actuality, see Matsumoto in Swanson 1993: 125. Matsumoto points out that we know of controversies in India between Yogācāra and Mādhyamika, but we never hear of controversies between a separate Tathāgatagarbha tradition and, e.g., Yogācāra.
4. *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra*, section 82; see Takasaki 1966: 57–61. Takasaki wrote also a large book on *The Formation of the Tathāgatagarbha Theory* (in Japanese – reviewed by de Jong 1979: 583–7). On the Yogācāra connections, see also Keenan 1982: 14–16. The assimilation of the Tathāgatagarbha teaching into Yogācāra in India may go some way to explain its relative lack of influence in Indian philosophy. See also Magee 2006: 453–60 for this equation of the *tathāgatagarbha* and the *ālayavijñāna* in the light of Tibetan discussions.
5. Zimmermann (2002: 52) suggests in passing that this image, found in the *Tathāgatagarbha Sūtra*, may relate in some way to the meditation practices known as recollection of the Buddha (*buddhānusmṛti*; *q.v.*) that seem to have been important in early and middle-period Mahāyāna.
6. This sense of innermost essential part, core, or 'heart' is reflected in the Tibetan translation *snying po*.
7. See Zimmermann 2002: 39–46, esp. 43–4, where he points out, however, that the image of the Tathāgata as an embryo would in many cases be misleading for the way the sources treat the notion of the *tathāgatagarbha*, since there is no sense of the Tathāgata's developing or growing involved. Another term that came to be used in more or less the same way as *garbha* in *tathāgatagarbha* is *gotra*, an expression that originally referred to the lineage or clan, or family. Hence all sentient beings have within them the lineage of the Tathāgata, or have within them that which makes them members of the Tathāgata's lineage (rather than that of the Arhats or Pratyekabuddhas, or *icchantikas* with no lineage at all). On the wider use of *-garbha* expressions in ancient India, and their connection with family lineage through paternal blood, see Hara 1994.
8. Note that Zimmermann's researches suggest that the specific concept or expression *tathāgatagarbha*, which is not that common in the sūtra itself, first appears here as an interpolation (2002: 31–2). Note also that the earliest translation of this sūtra into Chinese seems to be at the end of the third century (*ibid.*: 77–9). If so, it was translated very close in time to its supposed composition in India, at a time when evidence on the ground for Indian Mahāyāna was slight. What that tells us about the nature of Indian Mahāyāna, its transmission to China and the importance of Mahāyāna (and the *tathāgatagarbha*) in China is unclear.

9. The Chinese version here differs somewhat from the Tibetan. See Ruegg 1973: 49 ff. and 71. For a complete translation of this sūtra from Buddhabhadra's fifth-century Chinese version, see William H. Grosnick in Lopez 1995b: Ch. 7, 96 for this section; for a translation from the Tibetan versions (the Tibetan canonical translation was *c*. 800 CE) and study, see Zimmermann (2002: 103–5 for this section). The Tibetan has several additions compared with Buddhabhadra's Chinese, although this need not necessarily indicate that Buddhabhadra's translation is based on an earlier recension of the text than the Tibetan (see the discussion in Zimmermann 2002: 16–24).
10. See Zimmermann (2002: 52). Zimmermann argues (*ibid*.: 64) that one of the purposes of the sūtra's authors may have been to encourage those hitherto uninterested to join the Mahāyāna community. See also *ibid*.: 75–7. Stressing the presence of a fully-enlightened Buddha in each and every sentient being may anyway have been intended to encourage support for the Mahāyāna, including material support from the wider lay community. The sūtra certainly shows little interest in Abhidharma-style doctrinal philosophical precision.
11. The ethical potential of the *tathāgatagarbha* was nevertheless drawn, if only in passing, particularly later. The *Ratnagotravibhāgavyākhyā* urges that due to the *tathāgatagarbha* all sentient beings (including animals) should be viewed with the respect given to one's teacher. Ruegg (1980; cf. Zimmermann 2002: 76, n. 155) points out that the Tathāgatagarbha sūtras and tradition were particularly important in the rise of a move in Mahāyāna towards vegetarianism (although historically vegetarianism has been by no means normal in Buddhism outside East Asia, where it may indeed be connected with the centrality of the *tathāgatagarbha* in East Asian Buddhism). On the body of the Tathāgata present even in animals, see Zimmermann 2002: 84, 133. However, it should be noted that there may have been wider cultural factors in the urge of vegetarianism in some circles of Indian Buddhism. Vegetarianism was (and is) an important sign and preserver of ritual purity and thus social, cultural and religious superiority in Brāhmanic circles. Vegetarianism among potential recipients of their donations (and thus sources of merit) was hence one factor of importance (along with ritual power, which may or may not be associated with vegetarianism) to the wider lay community (which in India is always broadly Brāhmanic) within which Buddhism competed for support from often scarce resources.
12. Zimmermann 2002: 77, 79 ff.; see also Zimmermann 1999. Zimmermann (2002: 81) speaks of the notion of the 'eternal Buddha' in the *Lotus Sūtra*. In Chapter 7 I shall question whether the *Lotus* itself (when distinguished from its East Asian interpretation) holds a theory of the eternal Buddha.
13. Zimmermann (2002: 53) suggests that the intention of the sūtra's authors or compilers may be that Buddhahood is already present in sentient beings, but not yet efficacious. Cf also *ibid*.: 62–7, 77.
14. This is in the so-called **Tathāgatotpattisaṃbhavanirdeśa*, a sūtra now included in the *Avataṃsaka* collection. See Takasaki (1958: 52; 1966: 35–6; for translation of two

exerpts, see Gómez, in Lopez 1995b: Ch. 8). Cf. Zimmermann 2002: 54, 61–2. In terms of the wider context of Buddhist doctrinal history, it may well also link in with a well-known concept found, for example, in undeveloped form even in Pali canonical sources that consciousness is in itself originally and intrinsically pure, luminous and radiant (*cittaṃ prabhāsvaram*), in itself free of the taints of the passions (*kleśas*) which therefore impinge on it only adventitiously. That is why the passions can be removed, and why it is that once removed consciousness can remain free of them. Hence, in itself and therefore from its own point of view always free of the taints of the passions, consciousness is in a sense intrinsically enlightened (see Lamotte 1962: 52–4; Ruegg 1969: 411 ff.; Zimmermann 2002: 81 – Zimmermann also suggests a possible connection or association in origins between the Tathāgatagarbha tradition and the doctrine of the *pudgala*, *q.v.*).

15. Translated by Wayman and Wayman 1974. See 1–4. For more on possible Mahāsāṃghika origins or associations of the *tathāgatagarbha*, see Magee 2006: 451–2. Cf. also the translation in Chang 1983: 363 ff., and Paul 1980a. All citations are from the Wayman and Wayman translation.
16. The exact meaning of *dharmakāya* depends on tradition. See Chapter 8 below.
17. On the role and importance of 'faith' or 'trust' (*śraddhā*) in the Tathāgatagarbha tradition, see Ruegg 1989: 46–9. Cf the assertion in the **Mahābherīhāraka Sūtra* that only the Bodhisattvas understand the eternal character of the Tathāgata, and also that they are the ones responsible for the preservation of the *Tathāgatagarbha Sūtra* (Zimmermann 2002: 90).
18. For a detailed study of this, and what it can tell us about the nature and origins of the Mahāyāna, see the lengthy study in Japanese by Masahiro Shimoda. This book is summarized and reviewed in English in Sasaki 1999. Apparently Shimoda argues that both the two main sections of the sūtra and its three Chinese translations can be traced to different socio-religious groups (Zimmermann 1999: 147, n. 13).
19. Ch'en (1964: 115–16); on the *icchantikas*, see Liu 1984 and Karashima 2007. Cf. also Buswell, in Buswell and Gimello 1992: 107 ff. Karashima argues that originally the term was used in the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* to refer to monks who claimed to be arhats and who rejected the sūtra itself and its teaching on the eternal nature of the Tathāgata and the existence of the *tathāgatagarbha*. For Daosheng and the *icchantikas*, the 'Nirvāṇa school' in China, and its speculations on the Buddha-nature, see Lai 1982. Even as late as the ninth-century in Japan there was an important debate between the Tendai (Chinese: Tiantai) master Saichō, advocating the universality of eventual Buddhahood, and Tokuitsu, advocate of a Yogācāra position of distinct lineages including the unsaveable *icchantikas* (Swanson 1993: 115–16). Tiantai/Tendai relies on the *Lotus Sūtra*, which in East Asian Buddhism is taken as having important links to the Tathāgatagarbha tradition. The original kernel of the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* was apparently completed by 300 CE in Kashmir. It was increased to three or four times its original length during the following century. The sūtra apparently cites the *Lotus Sūtra* at one point (Blum 2004).

20. Perhaps the *Mahāparinirvāṇa* contrasts here also with the *Śrīmālā Sūtra* which, while it uses the term 'Self' of the *dharmakāya*, avoids using it directly of the *tathāgatagarbha* even though the two are said to be in some sense the same. Richard King (1995a: 15) sees the *Śrīmālā Sūtra* as more of a transitional sūtra in this respect than the *Mahāparinirvāṇa*. It would be rash to conclude from this alone, however, that the *Śrīmālā* is earlier in date than the *Mahāparinirvāṇa*.
21. Lhasa edn, Nya, f. 147b. 'Buddha-element' here is Tibetan *sangs rgyas kyi khams*, i.e. *buddhadhātu*, the 'Buddha-realm' and hence Buddha-nature. This is a term which appears to be used for the first time in the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra*, as an equivalent for the *tathāgatagarbha*. Cf. the translation from the Chinese version by Yamamoto: *Mahāyāna Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra* 1973: I, 181, now available online at http://www.nirvanasutra.org.uk/index.htm (accessed 21 Mar. 2007). The expression *buddhadhātu* is also used for the relics of a Buddha, worshipped in stūpas. The connection between this usage and the *tathāgatagarbha* in the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* (through a suggested idea of the Buddha-nature as originating in some sort of internalization of the Buddha-stūpa, now felt to be immanent in sentient beings) has been studied (in Japanese) by Masahiro Shimoda (see Sasaki 1999: 192–3, and Takasaki 2000: 80–1). It would appear that Shimoda sees the quest for a 'living Buddha' experienced internally, in conscious opposition to worship of Buddha relics in stūpas, as an important factor in the origins of the Mahāyāna (Sasaki 1999: 195).
22. Translated from the quote in the *mDzes rgyan* of the Tibetan Bu ston (1290–1364) (Bu ston 1971: 43–5); cf. Ruegg 1973: 113–14; 1989: 22–3; *Mahāyāna Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra* 1973: III, 660; and Liu 1982: 87–8.
23. No doubt it is for this reason that in China a certain Senggao (Seng-kao) of Zhongxing (Chung-hsing) temple, a leading scholar of Abhidharma, while accepting the larger Perfection of Wisdom sūtra as authentic, rejected the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* saying that it was not the word of the Buddha (Lai 1982: 139). He was by no means alone, and initially the debates in China over the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* in particular were quite fierce.
24. For a recent discussion of Buddhist, and *tathāgatagarbha*, influence on Gauḍapāda, see King 1995b. Zimmermann (2002: 67) mentions in passing 'striking' similarities with Pāśupata Śaivism, parts of which presumably go back earlier than the *Tathāgatagarbha Sūtra*. For a valuable overview and discussion of the issues, see Ruegg 1989: Ch. 1 (on the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra*, see *ibid.*: 21–6).
25. For discussion, see Takasaki 1966: Introduction. Takasaki inclines towards some sort of Yogācāra input into the text, although it may not be the classical (or 'pure') Yogācāra of Vasubandhu.
26. Takasaki 1966: 186–7. All references are to this translation. For a lengthy and detailed review of Takasaki's book, see de Jong 1979: 563–83.
27. Hence (as Grosnick 1981 suggests) Buddhahood is not in any way extinction but (a potentially positive state of) nonorigination. This point may have been doctrinally important

in the Mahāyāna re-evaluation of Buddhahood and the continuing caring presence of the (or a) Buddha.

28. Note, however, that David Seyfort Ruegg, in his important work on the Tathāgatagarbha theory, has interpreted the *Ratnagotravibhāga* (or expounded an interpretation of the *Ratnagotravibhāga*) as a Mādhyamika work. This position argues that the *tathāgatagarbha* is in fact in itself nothing more than the Mādhyamika emptiness (i.e. it is simply absence of intrinsic existence; Ruegg 1969: esp. 313 ff.; cf. the dGe lugs view discussed in the following section). This thesis has been criticized at length in a review article by Schmithausen (1973b: 123 ff.). Schmithausen has argued that reference to the *tathāgatagarbha* as emptiness must be understood in terms of the particular meaning of emptiness for this tradition – that emptiness is a particular aspect of the *tathāgatagarbha*, i.e. that the *tathāgatagarbha* is empty of defilements, not that it is identical with the Mādhyamika understanding of the term emptiness (*ibid.*: 133 ff.). For a later (and perhaps more cautious) statement, see Ruegg 1989, esp. Ch. 1. See also the following note.
29. Ruegg 1989: 305–9; cf. Zimmermann 2002: 82. Notice the suggestion here (whether unfair or not) that the doctrine of universal emptiness found, e.g., in Mādhyamika could lead to depression, a sort of spiritual pessimism. On the translation 'excessive self-love', which follows the Tibetan, see de Jong 1979: 575. The pragmatic orientation of this allows the possibility (taken up by some later interpreters) that the *Ratnagotravibhāga* is not here stating as a point of ontology that the *tathāgatagarbha* really ultimately exists. Thus there is no real ontological difference with Mādhyamika. For comment, see Zimmermann 2002: 82, n. 172. This interpretation would be that termed in Tibet *rang stong*, 'self-empty' (see below). Although initially it looks difficult to follow through succesfully, it has to be admitted that there are parts of the *Ratnagotravibhāga* that would permit such an interpretation. In this very section the defects or taints (passions) are said to be unreal, but that which is said to be real (ostensibly the *tathāgatagarbha* itself) is glossed as *nairātmya*, i.e. the not-Self, of the taints (Takasaki 1966: 308). In Mādhyamika terminology this would permit an identification of the *tathāgatagarbha* with 'absence of intrinsic existence' (*niḥsvabhāva*) itself and hence emptiness (*śūnyatā*) in the fully Mādhyamika sense.
30. See Takasaki 1966: 210–11; cf. Schmithausen 1973b: 135–6 and Ruegg 1989: 24–5.
31. For the Chinese Mādhyamika master Jizang's attempt to do something similar (but not necessarily with the same results), see Lai 1982: 144–7. Cf. also the earlier Indian attempt to explain the *tathāgatagarbha*, and perhaps to dissolve away its radicality, by assimilating it to the *ālayavijñāna* so that the *tathāgatagarbha* doctrine becomes simply a restatement of Yogācāra. It is worth recalling that while in Tibet Mādhyamika one way or another became the dominant form of Mahāyāna philosophy, in India it was probably Yogācāra that was dominant.
32. For a survey of some Tibetan approaches to the *tathāgatagarbha*, see Magee 2006.
33. On the accusation that the *tathāgatagarbha* doctrine is non-Buddhist (or requires radical interpretation to avoid the accusation that it is non-Buddhist), an accusation that

is found also in the modern Critical Buddhism movement in Japan (see below), see Zimmermann 2002: 83–4. Zimmermann points out that this works with a very essentialist idea of what Buddhism is, and also rests on identifying Buddhism solely with its doctrines. But it seems that historically even the doctrines of Buddhism may well have been much more varied than is sometimes thought (as Zimmermann p. 83 seems to accept; cf. the interesting Thai case below). What was involved in the establishment of doctrinal orthodoxy in Buddhism, and how doctrinal orthodoxy could be maintained (and by whom – kings may have played a role here in some phases of the history of Buddhism, but the influence of kings was always limited by the limits on their power) even if there was a wish to do so, particularly as Buddhism spread across a whole subcontinent and then into other countries far removed geographically and culturally from India, requires much more reflection and consideration.

34. For a modern tendency towards a *rang stong* reading of the *tathāgatagarbha* doctrine in the *Ratnagotravibhāga*, see Ruegg 1969. For the Bodies of the Buddha, and the dGe lugs tradition on it in particular, see Chapter 8 below. See also Tsong kha pa's pupil, mKhas grub rje (1968: 51 ff.); also Hopkins (1983: 382). mKhas grub rje (pronounced: Kaydrup Jay) lived from 1385 to 1438.
35. Ruegg 1963: 73 ff. and Williams (1982: 72 ff.). The thinker most associated with this Jo nang pa ontology was Dol po pa Shes rab rgyal mtshan (pronounced: Shay rap gyel tsen; 1292–1361). See Stearns 1999. For a translation of one of his most important works, see Hopkins 2006. See also Kapstein 2000: esp. 106–19 and Magee 2006: 475–92; 499–510. For a detailed study of the *gzhan stong* interpretation of the *tathāgatagarbha* in Tibet (embodying a critique of the reading offered in an important *Ratnagotravibhāga* commentary by Tsong kha pa's pupil rGyal tshab rje (pronounced Gyeltsap Jay; 1364–1462) and rather favoured by Ruegg 1969), with particular but by no means exclusive reference to the bKa' brgyud school, see Hookham 1991. A Jo nang website is http://www.jonangfoundation.org/ (accessed 31 Mar. 2007). Hakamaya 1989 is a defence of a Jo nang-like interpretation of the *Ratnagotravibhāga* against that of the dGe lugs (and that of Ruegg) by an important representative of the Japanese Critical Buddhism movement. Hakamaya considers that a dGe lugs pa should not accept the authenticity of the *Ratnagotravibhāga* and indeed the *tathāgatagarbha* itself. To do so is 'to eviscerate the core of [Tsong kha pa's] philosophy' (1989: 75).
36. *dBu ma chen po*; see Ruegg 1973: 4 and Kuijp 1983: 43ff. For a very similar rNying ma pa usage, and the superiority of 'Great Mādhyamaka' to Yogācāra, see Dudjom Rinpoche 1991: vol. 1: 178–86. This expression has a range of meanings in Tibet (often related to intersectarian polemics and 'oneupmanship'), and is not always used in the 'Tathāgatagarbha-absolutist' sense found here.
37. The Jo nang pa monasteries in Tibet were suppressed under the rule of the Fifth Dalai Lama (1617–82), although Jo nang lineage transmissions and practices seem to have continued and a *gzhan stong* interpretation of the *tathāgatagarbha* very similar to that of the Jo nang pa is widespread particularly in the rNying ma and bKa' brgyud schools,

but also (at least during the last 250 years) in some strands of the Sa skya school and even (perhaps through rNying ma influence) among the Bon po. It is unlikely that the closure of the Jo nang monasteries was due directly to their doctrinal positions, no matter how unpalatable they were to the ruling dGe lugs. For an example of another Buddhist tradition, also as it happens with a strong interest in the Tathāgatagarbha doctrine, that was periodically suppressed as heretical and in this case eventually died out, this time in China, see the 'Three Stages School' (*Sanjie Jiao*; *San-chieh Chiao*: Hubbard 2001, and Hubbard's articles in Griffiths and Keenan 1990, and Lopez 1995b; see also two papers, by Lewis and Forte, in Buswell 1990). Again, the issues may well have been political, social or economic rather than doctrinal, since by Chinese Buddhist standards the Sanjie Jiao Buddhist doctrinal positions do not appear particularly unusual or radical (e.g. all sentient beings should be seen as here and now actual Buddhas – hence a Sanjie Jiao practice of bowing to dogs on the street – but nonsentient things do not have the Buddha-nature. On the other hand regarding oneself it is necessary to see one's own deep evil tendencies and practise with extreme care accordingly). It has been suggested that they were suppressed because they advocated the suspension of the normal structures of society (Chappell 1996: 166). The school seems to have been particularly austere and single-minded in its Buddhist practice as well as socially active in charitable work (through the 'Inexhaustible Storehouse' that lent without interest to those who were poor and in need). All Buddhist traditions relied on lay support, and ideally needed strong lay supporters. As with the Jo nang tradition in Tibet, the Sanjie Jiao seems to have allied itself with lay political forces that were the losing side in their political struggles. The difference is that in Tibet the winning side was eventually (through their lay Mongol backers) itself a religious order, the dGe lugs under the Fifth Dalai Lama. We know of the Sanjie Jiao through the discovery of several of their texts in the early 1900s at the Central Asian cave site of Dunhuang, containing manuscripts from the fifth–eleventh centuries CE. Otherwise, since their texts were proscribed and not copied or included in monastic libraries, the school would have been all but completely lost. Another Mahāyāna school that was suppressed was Tachikawa Shingon in seventeenth-century Japan (for a short account, see Rambelli, in Payne and Tanaka 2004: 182–5). In the case of this much-criticized tantric school with a particular interest in magic (including bringing back to life the dead and making the poor rich) it was for alleged sexual misdemeanours, and ritual activity with skulls. Perhaps there is no direct Tathāgatagarbha link here, but a literal interpretation of the idea that all sentient beings are already enlightened is open to the possibility (or may have been thought to be, particularly by Confucian-oriented authorities viewing some tantric imagery) of antinomian behaviour on the basis that enlightened beings (and hence from the *tathāgatagarbha* point of view *all* sentient beings) are beyond mundane dualistic discriminating concepts of good and evil or right and wrong.

38. It should also be noted that the *gzhan stong* teachings seem to harmonize much more closely with the main doctrinal direction of Buddhist Tantricism. Tantricism was, of course, of central importance in Tibet. Dol po pa was a renowned specialist in the *Kālacakra*

Tantra, and even his opponents admitted that he was a great meditator and tantric practitioner (if, they thought, a poor philosopher). Hence, perhaps, the claim of *gzhan stong* Great Mādhyamika superiority is associated with a claim of final tantric superiority over exoteric Buddhism, bound up in part at least with a felt need for some sort of *gzhan stong* doctrinal framework for the Tantras and their practice (cf. Magee 2006: 485–7).

39. On the *Foxinglun*, see Takasaki 1966: 47–9, King 1984: 255–67 and a short note also in Zimmermann 2002: 88 with reference to a 1977 Japanese study by Takemura (see also de Jong 1979: 584); on Paramārtha and the *Dasheng qixinlun*, see Demiéville 1973. For a cautious statement, see also Grosnick 1983: esp. 44–5) and his subsequent argument for Paramārtha's authorship (Grosnick 1989).
40. For an interesting study of the theme of faith and its relationship to practice in the *Awakening of Faith in the Mahāyāna*, see Park 1983: Ch. 10. Basing himself on the commentary by the Korean Wŏnhyo (617–86), Park argues that a better translation of the title would be the *Treatise on Awakening Mahāyāna Faith*.
41. For the suggestion by some scholars that it was actually composed by a certain Tanyan (T'an-yen; 516–88), to whom is attributed among other works a commentary on the *Awakening of Faith*, see Chen 2002: 64–5.
42. Although what is effectively a cosmological or quasi-cosmological interpretation of the *tathāgatagarbha* may sometimes be implied in later Indian thought, for example in the Buddhist Tantras. And for an earlier context for the development of a cosmological interpretation of the Buddha-nature one might look to the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*, which is the subject of the following chapter. Here we find a 'cosmic Buddha', Vairocana, as a personification of the true nature of things. Vairocana is regularly portrayed in Central and East Asian art as an enormous Buddha figure with, e.g., the sun and the moon on his body. As the true nature of things Vairocana is also assimilable to the Buddha-nature. The *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* was important in the development of Buddha-nature thinking in East Asia, although it is unclear how much of this large sūtra was available, and in what form, in ancient India itself.
43. Hakeda 1967: 28. All references are to this translation.
44. The notion of 'original (or "innate") enlightenment' (Japanese: *hongaku*) has become a central one in East Asian Buddhism, particularly in the Tendai school in Japan, although in recent years it has come under attack in some Japanese circles as a travesty of 'authentic' (and perhaps also 'original') Buddhism: 'This doctrine holds that enlightenment or the ideal state is neither a goal to be achieved nor a potential to be realised but the real status of all things. Not only human beings but ants and crickets, even grasses and trees, manifest innate buddhahood just as they are. Seen in its true aspect, every aspect of daily life – eating, sleeping, even one's deluded thoughts – is the Buddha's conduct' (Stone 2004: 618). Stone suggests that 'original enlightenment' in the *Awakening of Faith* still carries with it a sense of *potential* rather than an actuality already achieved that is lost in medieval Tendai writings. It may be so. But in the light of other Tathāgatagarbha writings this might be controversial. As we have seen, the ambiguity and tension

between mere potential and actuality already achieved (or potential for a sentient being precisely because in actuality it has always been already achieved) is central to the whole Tathāgatagarbha tradition. See also Swanson 1993: 117 ff.

45. Cf. the *Jñānālokālaṃkāra Sūtra*, where it is said that the *dharmakāya* 'is unmoving, does not originate mental actions, does not engage in pointless speculation, and does not reason dualistically. It does not discriminate; it is free from discrimination. It does not speculate; it is free from speculation. It does not imagine; it is free from imagination. It is tranquil and quiescent, of neither origination nor destruction' (Grosnick 1981: 38).
46. This may be all thoughts, or perhaps not literally all thoughts but only particular types of 'discriminating' thoughts (at least when one is in the pre- and post-meditation state). The text does not seem to be fully clear on this topic. This is analogous to some of the issues surrounding 'with form' and 'without form' Yogācāra. Cf. Park 1983: 81–3.
47. See Ruegg 1969: 152–3, n. 1; Shaw 1985: 111 ff. Cf. Swanson 1993: 145, n. 10, who points out that this is explicitly denied by the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra*. In China the view that the *tathāgatagarbha* includes insentient being was strongly held by, e.g., the Tiantai (T'ien-t'ai) tradition against its denial in the Huayan (Hua-yen) and early Chan schools.
48. This contrasts with a strong tendency throughout most of Buddhism radically to subordinate the gods to Buddhas. The gods, *qua* gods, are part of saṃsāra. Gods are worldly (*laukika*). To be a god is a form of rebirth due to good actions (*karma*). Buddhas are supramundane (*lokottara*) and hence completely different, as indeed are all enlightened beings. To confuse a god with a Buddha (as the current Dalai Lama has alleged in the case of supporters of 'the spirit' rDo rje shugs ldan, or Dorje Shukden; see Dreyfus 1998) is a very considerable mistake.
49. This fascinating topic is far too complex for adequate treatment here. We are dealing with several centuries of Chinese thought. In detail the Tiantai interpretation of the Buddha-nature differs in several significant ways from that of the *Awakening of Faith* given above. For a comprehensive study of the theme of 'inherent evil' in Tiantai doctrine, see Ziporyn 2000; see also Ziporyn 1994: 49–51 – Zhili's (Chih-li; 960–1028) suggestion (Ziporyn 1994: 50) that it is the poisons that destroy the poisons has exact parallels in, e.g., tantric theory in India but without in India (as far as I know) the implication that hence poisons must be integral to the Buddha-nature. Note also Zhiyi's condemnation of antinomianism and attempt to avoid any antinomian implications that might follow from his own doctrine; *ibid.*: 257–60, and the later more cautious treatment of this whole theme in Zhanran (Chan-jan; 711–82); *ibid.*: 261–70. But cf. the possible Tendai influences on radical Japanese antinomianism in the article by Rambelli, in Payne and Tanaka 2004: 184. The Tiantai school was particularly associated with the *Lotus Sūtra*. As we shall see in Chapter 7, this sūtra is important for its stress on the Buddha's skilful means, or skill-in-means, whereby a Buddha (or sometimes a very advanced Bodhisattva) out of compassion may adapt his teaching and perhaps even his behaviour to the needs of the particular situation. Applied to ethics, this means that an enlightened being's behaviour may well seem inappropriate or possibly even evil from

the unenlightened perspective. No doubt such considerations were among the factors at play in Zhiyi's employment of the *tathāgatagarbha* metaphysics here. How could a Buddha or advanced Bodhisattva act (as in theory skill-in-means entails they might) in a way that contravenes the monastic code, the moral code and all normal notions of morality? It must be (it was reasoned) that acting from the position of the Buddha-nature, the Buddha-nature itself is inherently evil as well as good.

50. Its attribution to Shōtoku Taishi himself, however, is extremely doubtful. There is some recent evidence that this commentary was probably written in China (see the article by Shigematsu in Foard *et al.* 1996: 273).
51. This contrasts with, e.g., the *rang stong* reading of the Tathāgatagarbha in Tibet, that would use Mādhyamika to interpret the *tathāgatagarbha*. It is not surprising that followers of a tradition, considering a particular doctrinal position to represent the Buddha's highest and final teaching, would seek to bring other teachings attributed to the (or a) Buddha one way or another into line with it. Nevertheless we have seen that Buddhism (and indeed Mahāyāna) is actually historically extremely diverse. Corresponding to that diversity is the acceptance of a range of positions as reflecting the Buddha's highest and final teaching. Hence we find a corresponding range of different attempts to bring other teachings into line.
52. For a convenient summary of Chan/Zen in doctrine, practice and institution, and contemporary scholarship on it, see Jorgensen 2004.
53. Note the importance here of the idea of the 'lineage'. Although found in Indian and Tibetan Buddhism the lineage and patriarchs are a particular feature of Buddhism in East Asia, where they link with reverence to the family and patriarchal ancestors. See the article 'Lineage' in Buswell 2004.
54. Chinese text for convenience from Eliot 1935: 160. Cf. Eliot's translation. The Chinese word translated as 'Essence' is *xing* (*hsing*), the same word used in *foxing*, Buddha-essence, or Buddha-nature. The earliest Chan texts make a point of mentioning the Buddha-nature, and one of the earliest compilations concerning Bodhidharma was composed in the sixth century by Tanlin (T'an-lin), a specialist in the *Śrīmālā Sūtra* (Broughton 2004: 57).
55. D. T. Suzuki's rather one-sided picture of Zen was to some extent a product of his own history and the era in which he wrote. For its contextualization, and a note of caution on its complete reliability for understanding Zen as such, see, e.g., Sharf 1995a. For criticisms of Suzuki by, e.g., a contemporary Japanese, Noriaki Hakamaya, see Swanson 1993: 135.
56. Unlike other Japanese Buddhist traditions. Apparently Dōgen considered that he had brought from China to Japan the only real and true form of Buddhism.
57. But cf. Bodiford 1996: 21 for evidence of the aristocratic orientation of Dōgen.
58. Masao 1971: 30–1. The idiosyncratic nature of Dōgen's reading seems to be obscured in the Nishiyama translation: Dōgen Zenji 1983: IV, 120; and although a footnote attempts to bring it out it remains opaque too in the Nishijima and Cross translation: Dōgen

1996: 1. Very controversially, in contemporary Japan Noriaki Hakamaya and others of the Critical Buddhism movement (see below) have recently argued that the later 12 fascicle *Shōbōgenzō*, unfinished at Dōgen's death, contradicted several of his earlier positions related to the Buddha-nature and particularly the idea of 'original enlightenment' in this *Shōbōgenzō* (for Japanese sources, see Swanson 1993: 129–30). For Shirō Matsumoto, also of the Critical Buddhism movement, and Dōgen, and responses from Tairyū Tsunoda, see Heine 2001. See also Heine's contribution to Hubbard and Swanson 1997.

59. Cf. the early Chinese master of the Nirvāṇa school, Baoliang (Pao-liang; died 509), writing before the *Awakening of Faith*, who is quite clear on the basis of the very same *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* that nonsentient things lack the Buddha-nature (Lai 1982: 143).
60. Cf. too Paramārtha's understanding of Yogācāra, and its similarities to 'without-form' Yogācāra (see Chapter 4 below).
61. Or 'harmony' (*wa*), 'an excuse for uncritical syncretism [that] plays into the hands of the powerful in coercing conformity from above' (from Hakamaya, in Swanson 1993: 131; see the longer discussion on pp. 133–4); see also Swanson 1993: 116–17 (Swanson's article is repr. in Hubbard and Swanson 1997). Since all things are, and always have been, enlightened, everything as it is is perfect. This 'total affirmation', it is argued, entails in socio-political terms an attitude of affirming the social and political status quo (Swanson 1993: 118; see also Stone 1999: 179 ff.). Other contemporary Japanese scholars have associated doctrines such as nonduality, emptiness and some sort of universal principle in all things with legitimating through 'harmony' submission to the state and hence with, e.g., twentieth-century emperor worship and Japanese military expansion (Stone 1999: 181). Perhaps not surprisingly, the notion of *wa* (as well as the *tathāgatagarbha*) was important to prince Shōtoku Taishi in establishing Buddhism in Japan. But for Hakamaya instead of *wa* what should be stressed is *faith*, a critically-based faith in the central teachings of Buddhism and clear rejection of doctrines that are contrary to those, a rejection necessarily based on reason and language. For criticisms of Hakamaya's derivation of a necessary moral weakness from *tathāgatagarbha* thought, see Gregory (in Hubbard and Swanson 1997: 290–1; a similar point is made by Sallie B. King in the same volume). Stone 1999: 183 points out the use of *tathāgatagarbha* ideology to promote socialist convictions and peace activism (the latter in the case of Thich Nhat Hanh, for example). Cf. also Heine's question (*ibid.*: 285) as to how exactly the Critical Buddhist scholarly academic project would in itself promote social change?
62. See Gregory's contribution to Hubbard and Swanson 1997: 287–8 for agreement that this description fits perfectly, e.g., the view of the important and influential Chinese Huayan scholar Zongmi (Tsung-mi; 780–841), based on the *Awakening of Faith* and other *tathāgatagarbha* sources, on whom he has worked extensively. Gregory points also to the

extent of indigenous Chinese influence on Zongmi's thought (but cf. *ibid*.: 289–90). For a paper by Matsumoto on the *tathāgatagarbha*, see his contribution to Hubbard and Swanson 1997: 165 ff.

63. Swanson 1993: 119–22. For Hakamaya on selflessness, see *ibid*.: 127. See also Bodiford 1996: 19 on 'direct intuition', 'no thought and no imagination', 'no mind', and 'non-reliance on words' as Zen concepts and slogans rejected by Critical Buddhism. Moreover nonconceptual insight as in itself a goal is also not Buddhism (Stone 1999: 162). Matsumoto states that, 'The enlightenment that Buddhism proffers is nothing other than thinking correctly about the teaching of dependent-origination' (Hubbard and Swanson 1997: 249). For Hakamaya, 'Criticism alone is Buddhism' (Hubbard, *ibid*.: vii). Hakamaya suggests that all this aversion to words, and all this talk of the ineffability of 'thusness', is more Chinese than Buddhist (Swanson 1993: 127). On Zen as not Buddhism, see *ibid*.: 134–5. On the extension in Japan of these criticisms to a wholesale attack on what is seen as a catalogue of socially discriminatory and grossly unjust practices engaged in by Sōtō Zen itself going back many centuries and extending into the 1980s (including upholding and using extensively a social category of certain people as of 'non-human', i.e. outcaste, status), see Bodiford 1996 (for a Sōtō Zen talisman to protect against deceased outcastes, see *ibid*.: 13–14; on justifications for discriminatory practices through using the idea of karmic recompense, e.g. 'it's their own fault'; cf. critical reflections in Stone 1999: 184; see also Bodiford 1996: 14–15). At least some of these discriminatory practices are opposed by other Japanese Buddhist traditions (*ibid*.: 21). In recent years, and under pressure, many of these practices in Sōtō Zen have been abandoned and in some cases apologies issued. It is within this context that Critical Buddhist attacks and the 'return to Indian Buddhist origins' need to be understood (see Bodiford 1996: 18 ff.; for more contextualizing of Critical Buddhism, see Hubbard's 'Introduction' to Hubbard and Swanson 1997).
64. For a series of essays on the movement, for and against, see Hubbard and Swanson 1997. On the *tathāgatagarbha*, and whether it is or is not Buddhist, see the papers in Part 2. For a detailed review article of this book, see Stone 1999.
65. Swanson 1993: 139. Akira Hirakawa has pointed out that the *tathāgatagarbha* is not always portrayed in Buddhist sources as a static 'absolute'. Sometimes it is simply the potential for Buddhahood, without that necessarily being an unchanging quasi-Self (*ibid*.: 140). For more examples, see *ibid*. 141–2. Broadly, the direction of these criticisms of Critical Buddhism is that its adherents tend enormously to simplify what are textually very complex and varied doctrinal issues.
66. Cf. my reference to the 'essentialistic fallacy' in Chapter 1 above. Gregory (in Hubbard and Swanson 1997: 293, 295, 297) refers to the essentialistic notion of 'true Buddhism' in the work of Hakamaya *et al*., a notion of a pure unchanging core or essence that he points out is rather like that of the *tathāgatagarbha* they are criticizing (cf. Stone 1999: 183 for another 'essentialistic' dimension of Critical Buddhism).

67. On the 'authoritarian theological self-righteousness' of Critical Buddhism, see Stone 1999: 171, 184–5.
68. For Hakamaya's own definition of Buddhism, see Swanson 1993: 127. Authentic Buddhism teaches causality, advocates altruism, and uses and values words as means of expressing truth. Takasaki has argued that the definition of Buddhism employed by followers of Critical Buddhism is too narrow. Eventually they might reject as not Buddhist even Śākyamuni himself (*ibid.*: 139; cf. Hubbard, in Hubbard and Swanson 1997: xii)! There is some similarity here to trends in Protestant Christianity, seeking for the original Christianity in the intentions of Christianity's founder gleaned from the earliest written scriptural sources (a point also made by Gregory in Hubbard and Swanson 1997: 293; but cf. Hubbard (*ibid.*: xii) who does not see the Critical Buddhist project as a search for some objective 'original' Buddhism as such). Similar parallels with Protestant Christianity have also been found in other areas of the Buddhist world, particularly in South-East Asia, and have led some modern scholars of Buddhism to coin the interpretive expression 'Protestant Buddhism' for a particular trend in some (specifically Theravāda) Buddhist circles since the late ninetenth century. What these scholars term 'Protestant Buddhism' is an approach to Buddhism (influenced by Protestant missionary presence particularly in, e.g., Sri Lanka) characterized by various broadly 'protestant' features, such as an attempt to 'get back to the original Buddhism'. Original Buddhism can be found in 'authentic scriptures' (the older the better, usually identified with the Pali Canon) rather than contemporary and traditional practices which are often considered to be corrupted by folk superstition (note the emphasis on *texts* rather than practices here). When this is done, it is claimed that Buddhism is quite different from the 'popular ritualistic superstition' of the masses (usually, in the South-East Asian context, Buddhism is found to be all about meditation and a simple if austere morality). Hence, the 'Protestant Buddhist' might claim, much of what has traditionally been Buddhism in, e.g., Sri Lanka is not *really* Buddhism. We must promote a return to the *original* Buddhism, the Buddhism of the Buddha reflected in authentic early texts (often edited or translated by Western scholars, and also interpreted on the basis of the views of Buddhism found among some Western scholars). In addition, the Protestant Buddhist approach tends to stress the centrality of socially-engaged action for saṃgha and laity alike. As well as meditation and simple morality, Buddhism is really all about 'good works'. For a quick statement on Protestant Buddhism, see the article 'Colonialism and Buddhism' in Buswell 2004. An authoritative statement in the Sinhalese context can be found in Gombrich and Obeyesekere 1988: Ch. 6. For papers, see Lopez 1995c, especially the paper by Hallisey.
69. To this extent they seem to have something in common with theologians in theistic religions, employing critical scholarly reflection within a context embedded in explicit faith commitment and its implications and perspectives.
70. On problems in the Critical Buddhist confidence that they can determine what authentic (or 'original') Buddhism is, see Gregory (Hubbard and Swanson 1997: 294–5).

71. Zimmermann 2002: 83 has argued against the Critical Buddhism movement that we cannot be so sure that a not-Self doctrine is universally definitive of Buddhism (cf. the doctrine of the *pudgala* in Chapter 1 above), and he too points out that we cannot be so confident anyway that we know what Śākyamuni Buddha himself taught and intended. On problems with not-Self as definitive of Buddhist identity, see the following section.
72. At the time of writing I am aware of very little recognition of this dispute in Western scholarship. Even in Thailand, although the dispute is well known there, there has apparently been little by way of serious academic writing on the subject. I rely for my information mainly on the paraphrased Thai sources in Cholvijarn 2007, although there is a relatively brief mention of the controversy in Seeger 2005: 221 ff.
73. Although it should be noted that recent research particularly by François Bizot has shown the presence of apparently tantric elements and quite possibly external tantric influence (perhaps from 'Hinduism' rather than Buddhism) on some developments within Theravāda Buddhism in Thailand and elsewhere in South-East Asia (although how far this is really 'tantric' in the sense in which the term is used in Indian religions remains a matter of scholarly discussion). For a quick survey in English of Bizot's work and the subject of 'tantric Theravāda', see Crosby 2000. On the 'complex and hybridized' nature of Thai Buddhism, see Donald Swearer's article 'Thailand' in Buswell 2004. 'Tantric Buddhist' influences may be present in the meditation practised by Thailand's fastest growing contemporary Buddhist movement, Wat Thammakāi (the *Dhammakāya* movement; *ibid*.: 831). This may have some as yet unclear influence on the adoption of a Self perspective among some Thai Buddhists associated with this movement. It perhaps links conceptually and spiritually with, say, the adoption of a *gzhan stong* perspective among tantric masters of the Jo nang tradition in Tibet.
74. This has many close parallels with the *gzhan stong* approach above.
75. Although, interestingly, Buddhadāsa does note some distinct similarities between the Buddhist nirvāṇa and the Brāhmanic Self, such as their permanence and their association with liberation (Cholvijarn 2007: 41–2, 121–2). Nevertheless, as Cholvijarn points out, the distinction between the Buddhist approach to the Self and that of the Brāhmanic *ātman* is made constantly by advocates of the not-Self perspective (*ibid*.: 49). As we have seen, this is something that supporters of the *tathāgarbha* are also very aware of, and perhaps therefore it was a point made repeatedly in ancient India too against their perspective. What Thai advocates of the Self argue in reply, however, is that to deny that Buddhism has anything like the Brāhmanic *ātman* is not to deny that it has a Self *as such*, on its own terms as properly understood. The same point is made in *tathāgarbha* discourse.
76. The sources for this dispute are in Thai. They are summarized in detail in Cholvijarn 2007. For the *Saṃgharāja*'s position, see pp. 10 ff.
77. Cholvijarn 2007: 12; cf. 79–80, 120. The *Saṃgharāja* holds that the *ātman* which is spoken of in Brāhmanism is not the true Self, since it is simply the mind at a level that has

not been purified of all impurities in the way that it is in Buddhism (*ibid*.: 120). There also appears to be a tendency at least in more recent sources to see it as 'unthinkable' (*acinteyya*; we might say 'ineffable'), i.e. (here, presumably) beyond the discursive mind (*ibid*.: 37; cf. Seeger 2005: 223, n. 690, who points out that nirvāṇa is not traditionally listed as an 'unthinkable' thing in the Pali Canon).

78. Note the parallels here to the *Tathāgatagarbha Sūtra* and the fully-enlightened Buddha dwelling within each sentient being. There is in fact a series of such unconditioned Dhamma-bodies in Dhammakāya meditation. Details of Dhammakāya meditation theory, which is complex, are unnecessary here. For an outline, see Cholvijarn 2007: 17 ff. It appears to include the idea of a type of nirvāṇa as an actual sphere or dwelling place where the enlightened beings live (see also *ibid*.: 76 ff., 117–18; Seeger 2005: 221–2). Hence, also with a certain Mahāyāna flavour (and incidentally with some similarities in this respect to Jainism), a Buddha remains located in an unconditioned supramundane place after death. There is a controversial Dhammakāya Foundation ritual whereby food, purified through meditation, is offered to the Buddha in the 'nirvāṇa realm' (Cholvijarn 2007: 27; Seeger 2005: 223, n. 685). Note that the creation of an 'internal Buddha' within the unenlightened practitioner that replaces him or her at death is a feature of the 'tantric Theravāda' practices studied by Bizot and others. Cholvijarn observes (*ibid*.: 113–14) that prominent figures associated with the Self perspective in Thailand have often been famous outside scholarly circles as well, among the wider populace, as Buddhist meditation masters and sources of miracles and sacred amulets. Like perhaps some of the early Mahāyāna forest hermit monks, or the later Buddhist Tāntrics, they have become people of power (potentially useful to the wider community) through their meditative achievements. They are widely revered, worshipped (for worldly success), and held to be arhats or (note!) Bodhisattvas. Their not-Self opponents, like P. A. Payutto, at least according to Cholvijarn, while often accepted as good practitioners are respected as scholars but not revered and worshipped in the same way. In other words, it seems they are not seen in the wider community as having the level of practice that goes with valuable magical power (i.e. *siddhis*). There are some similarities here, perhaps, with the *rang stong* versus *gzhan stong* dispute in Tibet.

79. Payutto refers to, and attacks, both *theras* ('elders', or senior monks) and *mahātheras* ('great elders' or very senior monks) who hold to the perspective of nirvāṇa as the true Self (Cholvijarn 2007: 31). Payutto explicitly relates the view of the Self-advocates to that of the Pudgalavādins (those who hold the doctrine of the *pudgala*; see Chapter 1 above), and hence a position discredited in the Pali (and Theravāda) canonical *Kathāvatthu* (*ibid*.: 38–40). Payutto's arguments seem to be very much in the style of, and would be in harmony with, much of contemporary Western scholarship on (canonical, mainstream, and Theravāda) Buddhism and the issue of the Self. But his opponents suggest that his (mis)interpretation of Buddhism on not-Self is serious, and may lead to the decline of the teachings of the Buddha (*ibid*.: 97; he feels the same about the other side; see Seeger 2005: 226). For a brief note on the dispute

over the Self in contemporary Thai Buddhism, and Payutto's role in it, see also Seeger 2007: 9.

80. Cholvijarn 2007: 65, based on a later oral interview; but cf. *ibid.*: 126–8.
81. Cholvijarn 2007: 25–6 (see in addition 67, 81 ff. on the inseparability of impermanence, suffering and not-Self). See also material based on Cholvijarn's oral interviews with Phra Rajyanvasith, *ibid.*: 64–5. In a detailed examination of a more recent source arguing the Self perspective, Cholvijarn notes that according to this perspective nirvāṇa is explicitly said to be *not void* of the real Self, which is released and liberated from defilements, it is not empty of substance and essence, but it is supremely empty (*paramaṃ suññaṃ*) of defilements or of the unreal Self (*ibid.*: 72; see also 85 ff.). When we say something is empty, we mean one thing that is really present is empty of another (*ibid.*: 86–7). As Cholvijarn points out, this has definite echoes of the *tathāgatagarbha*. It could almost be taken from, e.g., the *Śrīmālā Sūtra*. The Dhammakāya Foundation's true Self as the *dhammakāya* is itself, of course, a point of contact with the Tathāgatagarbha tradition's *dharmakāya*. Cholvijarn briefly treats the similarities with the *tathāgatagarbha*, and the *rang stong* versus *gzhan stong* dispute, at *ibid.*: 129–36. On the notion of the 'conventional Self', the 'doer, experiencer', which is not at all the same as the ultimate Self that is nirvāṇa, see, e.g., *ibid.*: 106, 116. Negation of the former does not entail negation of the latter. The true Self that is nirvāṇa is beyond any worldly and conceptual conventional Self. Moreover negation of the Self as held and understood by non-Buddhists does not entail negation of the Self as held and understood by the Buddha (*ibid.*: 107, 116). Not necessarily in keeping with this idea of the true Self as 'transcendental' and nirvāṇa is the argument also employed here that a Self is needed in order to explain how karmic causes lead to karmic results for the 'same being', 'same person', over different lifetimes (Seeger 2005: 224; cf. here similar suggestions or associations in Pudgalavāda, the *tathāgatagarbha* in the *Śrīmālā Sūtra*, and also the substratum consciousness in Yogācāra. Recall that in some important Yogācāra sources the *tathāgatagarbha* is identified with the substratum consciousness. Payutto's 'orthodox' Theravāda clarification of the issue is in Seeger 2005: 243 ff.). A further major subject of dispute between the two sides is how to interpret the statement attributed to the Buddha that 'all *dhammas* are not-Self' (*sabbe dhammā anattā*). For the argument of the Self-advocates that this does not entail that the ultimate actual final nirvāṇa itself (in opposition to any *concept* of nirvāṇa) is not-Self, see Cholvijarn 2007: 90 ff.
82. Payutto's arguments and his role in the dispute are also dealt with briefly in Seeger 2005: 227 ff. The dispute came to a head in 1999, amid controversy over the influence of the Dhammakāya Foundation, and allegations of financial impropriety. In the same year a Buddhist academic who was a critic of the Dhammakāya Foundation's teachings suffered a fire-bomb attack on his home. For a detailed account of the arguments for the Self perspective in a book published anonymously in 1999, directed particularly at Payutto, see Cholvijarn 2007: Ch. 3. Those who get the issue wrong (through teaching not-Self), it is alleged there, may end up in the hells (*ibid.*: 62–3).

Chapter 6 Huayan – the Flower Garland tradition

1. Huayan was transmitted from China to Korea and also to Japan in the late seventh century.
2. Or *Buddhāvataṃsaka Sūtra* (Chinese: *Huayanjing*; *Hua-yen Ching*).
3. The other rival centre for the production of the first Buddha image is Mathurā, south of Delhi, although it has been argued that in actual fact there may have been a couple of centuries of prior development. Use of Buddha images is referred to as an aspect of Mahāyāna visualization practice in the *Pratyutpanna Sūtra* (translated into Chinese in the second century CE; see Harrison 1992a: 222).
4. We are used to thinking of the latter as Buddhist missionaries. But Boucher (2006: 37) has suggested that the first Mahāyāna monks to reach China and take part in translation activities may well have been as much refugees from an unsympathetic attitude to Mahāyāna in their homelands as direct missionaries. Note also that if Buddhists could go *to* Central Asia and China, they could also come *from* Central Asia and China to India. This means that ideas (and texts) too could move in both directions (cf. Chapter 1 above, n. 11).
5. J. W. de Jong, 'Buddha's word in China', repr. in de Jong 1979: 79. This is still a very valuable article on the coming of Buddhism to China. The crucial importance of Central Asia in the process is noted. e.g. pp. 82, 85, 89. For consideration of some current problems, drawing on recent work by Erik Zürcher, see Boucher 2006: 34–7.
6. Rather as happens nowadays when Buddhist ideas are explained or expressed using current Western, e.g., philosophical or psychological 'equivalents', particularly in the fourth century Buddhist concepts were occasionally explained as equivalents for indigenous Chinese ideas commonly associated with Daoism. Thus *prajñā* ('wisdom'), for example, was said to be the equivalent of *dao* ('way'), *śūnyatā* ('emptiness') the equivalent of *wu* ('nonbeing'), nirvāṇa the equivalent of *wuwei* ('non-action') and so on. This was known as 'concept-matching' (*geyi*; *ko-i*), and as a process for the precise Chinese understanding of Buddhism itself in its own context and terms it was largely a failure (Lai 1979b; Lai's paper is a fascinating study of a series of fifth-century letters critical of Buddhism by a rationally-minded and down-to-earth Confucian, and responses from two Buddhist monks). In a different setting, at a popular level a form of Buddho–Daoist synthesis (with, of course, considerable Confucian influence) in Chinese religion has continued to the present day. See the article 'Daoism and Buddhism' in Buswell 2004.
7. *Lun Fogu biao* (*Lun fo-ku piao*; 'Memorial on the Bone of the Buddha'), trans. J. K. Rideout, in Birch 1967: 269–70. But (notwithstanding Han Yu's objections) the possession of Buddhist relics, particularly by the emperor, gave access to new forms of power. For examples of the political use, and also the medicinal or therapeutic (magical) use, of relics in Tang Chinese Buddhism, see Barrett 2001, 2007: 153–4, Chen 2002, Chen 2005: 58 ff.
8. My colleague John Kieschnick tells me, 'The petition was submitted in 819, a year before Xianzong's death and the same year in which Xianzong worshipped the relic. Han Yu's essay was an immediate response to recent events. At first, on reading the petition,

Xianzong wanted Han Yu put to death, but on the intervention of ministers loyal to Han Yu, settled for banishment. Luckily for Han Yu, the emperor died the following year at which point Han Yu was recalled to the capital. The relic discovered in the 1980s at the base of a stupa at Famen si outside of Xian is probably the very relic that Xianzong worshipped! So while it looked for a while as if Han Yu had won out over the relic when he was reinstated in the capital, in the end the relic had the upper hand'. On the Famen relic see, e.g., Chen 2002: 37 ff.; Sen 2003: 64 ff.

9. Completed under the sponsorship of the Chinese Empress Wu (see below), who both assisted the translation team and also authored a preface to the translation (Barrett 2001; 2005b repr.: 36).
10. On the early history of a 'proto-*Avataṃsaka Sūtra*' in India and China, showing that at least some sections of it were in circulation in India by the second century CE (and arguing that they were translated into Chinese by the famous translator Lokakṣema), see Nattier 2005.
11. For an example of a great Buddhist practitioner involved with Huayan (Japanese: Kegon) who seems to have been adept at visions, and blending his waking and his dream worlds so that 'reality' and 'fiction' are no longer clearly distinguishable descriptive categories, see the Japanese Myōe Shōnin in Tanabe 1992 (e.g. p. 56). Myōe sought to live in a world of visions and dreams, with 'reality' transformed in a religiously meaningful way by his visions and dreams. As Myōe put it in one of his poems, 'this world is but [a] reflection of a dream' (*ibid.*: 79).
12. Vairocana, or Mahāvairocana (Japanese: Dainichi), is also the principal Buddha in a number of Buddhist tantric sources (such as the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra*), and is the central and 'primordial' Buddha in, e.g., Shingon Tantricism in Japan. According to the founder of Shingon in Japan, Kūkai (774–835), Mahāvairocana is the *dharmakāya* and has (or is) the Body of Six Great Elements, earth, water, fire, wind, space and consciousness. From these six elements in harmonious interplay come all Buddhas, sentient beings, and material worlds (see Hakeda 1972: 88–9). In China and in Korea too Huayan at various points in its history was linked with esoteric (tantric) Buddhism. The association of the magical world of the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* with Mahāvairocana, and Mahāvairocana's early link to the world of tantric magic, suggest a possible association in some way between the trends found in the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* and the development in India of Buddhist Tantra. For the complexity of the relationship between Śākyamuni and Vairocana in the vast *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*, see Xing 2005: 170–1.
13. Cook 1977: 107–8. Cf. Cook's Ch. 7.
14. See the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*, Bk 20 (trans. in Cleary 1984–7, Vol. 1: 451–2); Cleary (1983: 188); Gómez (1967: 30).
15. Of course, we are close here to the philosophical teaching of the *tathāgatagarbha*, one of the sources for which is a section of the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* (see Chapter 5, n. 14 above) and which, in its *Awakening of Faith* version, profoundly influenced Fazang. The Buddha in this cosmic sense is a personification of the universe as seen correctly by the enlightened

nondual and nonconceptual mind. Note incidentally that since the *tathāgatagarbha* has intrinsic to it all the good Buddha-qualities, it follows that here the universe as *dharmadhātu*, the cosmic Buddha, the (abstract) actual true nature of things itself, is (we might say) fundamentally or intrinsically benevolent (but cf. Chapter 5 above for the theory of the intrinsic *evil* as well of the Buddha-nature in Tiantai thought).

16. For summaries of the sūtra, see Suzuki (1968: 147 ff.); Cleary (1983: 3 ff.); Sangharakshita (1985: 221 ff.). A complete translation from the Chinese is in the final volume of Cleary's three-volume translation of the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* (Cleary 1984–7).
17. From the summary by Sangharakshita 1985: 229–31.
18. Note the theme of repentance and confession, which is ancient in Buddhism and by no means unique to Mahāyāna. It might be thought to be in tension with any rigid interpretation of karma. In Mahāyāna sources there is also found reference to forgiveness by Buddhas for misdeeds, and purification or destruction of the negative karmic effects of such misdeeds. In Chinese Buddhism (influenced, perhaps, by the role of confession for infringing the Bodhisattva precepts in the important and 'apocryphal' *Fanwang Jing* ('Brahmā's Net Sūtra') there are frequent large public repentance rituals. See the article 'Repentance and Confession' in Buswell 2004.
19. On the magical use of sūtra texts in early Chinese Buddhism, see Campany 1991. On the whole issue of monks and magical power in Chinese Buddhism, see Kieschnick 1997: Ch. 2. On the theme of thaumaturgic powers in the success of Buddhism in China and Japan, see Faure 1996: Ch. 3. For more on Puan, and his donation of his body to insects, animals, and as proffered food to villagers to save the lives of pigs, see Benn 2007a: 81–3.
20. See Gregory 1983a: 284–6. On Dushun, see also Chang 1971. Chen 2005: 55 refers to several renunciates who were simultaneously specialists in the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* and also Daoist adepts. But this occurred not just at a 'popular' level. Fazang was also an adept at Daoist ritual practices (*ibid.*).
21. Conversion to Buddhism at the time was hence encouraged. One contemporary monk was accused of physically torturing Daoist priests as an incentive to conversion (Chen 2005: 57–8, reference to a paper by Antonino Forte). In terms of popular, in opposition to Confucian, appeal the idea of a woman emperor cannot have been too remarkable. In 653 a rebellion against the central government was led by a woman who declared herself emperor (Barrett 2007: 149).
22. For a prediction by the Buddha in a Mahāyāna sūtra of a female *cakravartin*, see the *Mahāmegha Sūtra*. This sūtra was of some importance at Empress Wu's court (Chen 2002: 77, and n. 102, 124 ff.; Barrett 2001; 2005b repr.: 27–8; see also Sen 2003: 96–7). It is also an important sūtra for magical control of rainfall (Schmithausen 1997: 58–63). Chen (2002: 124, n. 233, 127–8) notes that Empress Wu's ideologists added some passages to the Chinese translation of the *Ratnamegha Sūtra* glorifying the empress herself as a female *cakravartin* Bodhisattva predicted and approved by the Buddha (see also Barrett 2001; 2005b repr.: 27 – both follow previous research by Antonino Forte; for quotation, see Sen 2003: 55). Empress Wu was not the first Chinese ruler to have passages

inserted into sūtras drawing on the Buddha's power and prestige for political purposes. Barrett (2001; 2005b repr.: 28) points out that it may have been the advent of a 'false messiah' who appeared in China in 684 that prompted Empress Wu to take on the role of Maitreya and *cakravartin* herself in order to counter such 'popular charlatans'. Barrett (*ibid.*: 30–1) also draws attention to an interesting Buddhist manuscript dated to 670 discovered at Dunhuang that paints a horrific picture in the form of a prophecy by the previous Buddha Dīpaṃkara of an imminent apocalypse from which the only protection is the magical efficacy of written copies of the prophecy itself. Perhaps it was also against such alarmist popular religion, that chimed in with old Buddhist predictions of the decline of the Dharma and that was in danger of getting out of (government) control, that Empress Wu declared or decided to exploit her own messianic credentials.

23. The *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* was the centre of a series of religious activities in which Empress Wu took part just before her usurpation of power in 690 (Chen 2005: 14–19, but cf. 71). Empress Wu's morality included the probable murder by poison of her son, the heir-apparent, who was starting to prove a threat to her power. At least, this was certainly suspected by her contemporaries (Chen 2002: 60). Barrett (2001; 2005b repr.: 15) refers to 'mutilation and judicial murder' of her rivals, and how she was 'obliged to kill repeatedly' (*ibid.*: 41; such as killing the monk Huaiyi, who supervised the translation of the *Ratnamegha Sūtra*; see Sen 2003: 98–9). For evidence of Empress Wu's genuine later regret and repentance for her (mis)deeds, see Chen 2002: 131. Ever the pragmatist, in her repentance she had recourse to Daoist as well as Buddhist remedies (see also Barrett 2001; 2005b repr.: 35; cf. Chen 2005: 43–4; on Fazang's own ambivalent friendship with Daoists, and his own Daoist abilities, see Chen 2005: 32–3, 52 ff.).
24. On Empress Wu, see Paul 1980b: 191 ff., Weinstein 1987: 37–47, Barrett 2001 (2005b repr.), and Chen 2002 and references, Chen 2005, Sen 2003: Ch. 2, esp. 94 ff. Barrett deals in particular with Empress Wu and Buddhism. Chen's long 2002 paper is an interesting study of Empress Wu's use for political reasons of the Buddhist cult of relics; see here also Sen 2003: 57–76. Cf. the alleged distribution in India of Buddha relics by Aśoka, mentioned in Chapter 1 above, as a means of uniting his fundamentally disunited empire. Chen and Barrett (also Barrett 2007: 154–5) both note a number of parallels (no doubt intended) between Empress Wu and Aśoka. For a detailed study of Fazang in history – as a shrewd politician, a spiritual warrior, and a 'mediator between humanity and the heavens' – see Chen 2005.
25. For a translation of selections from an early Japanese chronicle showing the interplay between Buddhism and the state in Japan from the introduction of Buddhism in 552 CE up until 697 CE, see Lopez 1995b: Ch. 17. On the use of large and impressive statues of the Buddha to stand for, or imply, the local king or emperor in India too, see, e.g., Cohen 1998: 398–9.
26. Chen 2005: 22 suggests that this image had been envisioned much earlier by one of Fazang's older contemporaries, and it may anyway have been used by Fazang in teaching his disciples rather than Empress Wu herself. Moreover, while Fazang may have been a

clever philosopher and a good teacher, what particularly impressed Empress Wu's court appears to have been not philosophy but his abilities in magic rituals and the employment of magical formulae (*dhāraṇīs*). Fazang could make it rain and snow, overcoming drought – apparently even the mummified body of the Chan master Huineng (Hui-neng; 638–713) was said to be effective in producing rain (Benn 2007: 154; cf. *ibid*.: 176–9, 196. For mummification in Chinese Buddhism, see Sharf 1992 and Benn 2007a: 184–7). It is also claimed that Fazang could use magic very effectively in battles (Chen 2005: 22–3, 30–1, 33 ff.; on the incorporation of Buddhist as well as Daoist elements in 'magical warfare' in East Asia, see also McFarlane 1994: 202–8 and references). The magic the hagiographies say he used to suppress the Khitan rebellion is described by Chen as 'black magic'. Fazang himself is said to have asked permission from Empress Wu to use the 'left-hand path' (no doubt as 'skill-in-means'; cf. the discussion in the following chapter). The practice he employed was one of 11-faced Avalokiteśvara, sometimes spoken of as the 'Bodhisattva of Compassion', who (we are told) was subsequently seen by the enemy descending from the sky to join the battle; cf. also the much later case of the Mongolian lama lCang skya Rol pa'i rdo rje (pronounced: Janggya Rolpay Dorjey) who in the eighteenth century is said to have used ritual magic to launch bolts of fire into a battle hundreds of miles away on behalf of his Chinese emperor patron (Hevia 1993: 252). There is some evidence that Empress Wu was also thought to be an emanation of Avalokiteśvara (Chen 2005: 41). The relevant sūtra of 11-faced Avalokiteśvara appears to have been particularly popular at this time in China for its magical power (the magical power of its *dhāraṇī*) in dispelling enemies and natural disasters, and the sūtra speaks of Avalokiteśvara's ability to drive away enemies from borderlands. Fazang's success with it seems to have contributed to the popularity of 11-faced Avalokiteśvara in China at the time (but Chen shows that in reality defeat of the Khitans took a year and was by no means that easy). On other miracle stories related to Fazang's abilities, see Chen 2005: 46 ff. Several of these concern the great power of the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*, and Fazang's brilliance in preaching it. Fazang also burnt off a finger in honour of the Buddha (on such activities, see the following chapter), and is said to have slit open his belly and 'destroyed his liver' as part of a Buddhist fundraiser (*ibid*.: 69–70, 74). Since he continued to live for a further 8 years after this feat, Chen concludes that like others from his Central Asian Sogdian homeland Fazang must have been a magician adept at the 'staged show'. On the use of the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* in Japan for producing rain, see Tanabe 1992: 70.

27. This is in spite of the fact that Fazang, who was in charge of relic veneration at Empress Wu's court, was also probably involved in the coup that led to her downfall (Chen 2002: 101–2; 2005: 24–5). Chen describes Fazang as 'a politically opportunistic and shrewd monk, who was ready to abandon his most important secular supporter when he sensed that the political situation had started to spin out of her control, making his continued association with her increasingly to his own disadvantage (or as he might have thought of it, to the disadvantage of his religion)'. Chen's after-thought, in brackets, is

important. As we shall see when we look more closely in the following chapter at skill-in-means, the Bodhisattva acts for the welfare of sentient beings. In order to promote Buddhism for their welfare, he can adapt himself to suit changing situations and there appear to be few if any limits to the adaptations he or she can make (the Bodhisattva Empress Wu herself introduced death by strangulation – the penalty for crimes against the state – for even plotting to steal a Buddhist image, whether public or private; Barrett 2001; 2005b repr.: 31). This is no doubt how Fazang would have seen it. Chen points out that Fazang continued to enjoy the support of the three successors of Empress Wu (see also Chen 2005: 26 ff.; on the political wisdom, certainly in the interests of Buddhism, of Fazang's 'betrayal', see *ibid.*: 73).

28. For translations see, e.g., Chan 1963: 409–14; Chang 1971: 224–30; de Bary *et al.* 1972: 168–72.
29. From the biography of Fazang in Chang 1971: 224. See also Chen 2005: 21–2. Chen considers that the essay was actually written quite early in Fazang's career, and in reality may have had nothing to do with the empress.
30. See Cook 1977: 29–30. Cf. Dōgen's views on the Buddha-nature. For Dōgen, I suspect, Fazang's teaching would still be tinged with duality, inasmuch as Fazang made any distinction at all between *li* and *shi*, noumenon and phenomena.
31. See Cook 1977: 44 ff., and Fazang in Cleary 1983: 152 ff.
32. This is the text known as the *Huayanwujiaozhiguan* (*Hua-yen wu-chiao chih kuan*). See Cleary 1983: 56.
33. In de Bary *et al.* 1972: 179 ff. For a complete study of Zongmi and the 'sinification of Buddhism', see Gregory 1991. Zongmi's acceptance of the *tathāgatagarbha* critique of Mādhyamika emptiness, based on the *Awakening of Faith*, can be found at *ibid.*: 218–23; cf. too *ibid.*: 165–7.
34. See here Chang 1971: 136–71.
35. Gimello 1983: 335, 337; italics in original. For Fazang, see Cook 1977: 112 ff.; see also Gregory 1983b: esp. 33–9 for Fazang on the Sudden Teaching. For more on faith in Buddhism, see esp. Chapter 10 below.
36. On Fazang, the sudden teaching, and Huayan, see Gregory 1991: Ch. 5, esp. 137 ff. Note the importance of the *tathāgatagarbha* and the *Awakening of Faith* in Fazang's thought here (*ibid.*: 139–40).
37. For an example of chanting the *Lotus Sūtra* for the birth of a son (in this case the famous Japanese monk Myōe Shōnin), see Tanabe 1992: 50–1.
38. For illustrations and discussion, see Hikata 1960: 1–50.
39. For comments and illustrations, see Gaulier *et al.* 1976, Part I. See also the article on 'Huayan Art' in Buswell 2004.
40. See, e.g., Sickman and Soper 1956: 71–2, and ill. 55A. The construction was supervised by the great Pure Land master Shandao (see Chapter 10 below). On the Longmen sculpture in its cultural context, see McNair 2007.
41. Figures: Agency for Cultural Affairs 1972.

Chapter 7 The *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka (Lotus) Sūtra* and its influences

1. For the Chinese reciters, see Tay 1976: 161–2; for the Japanese reciters, see Dykstra (1983: 85, 91). For some further Chinese stories relating to the *Lotus* and its miracles, see Stevenson 1995. It is not easy to know how to take these claims for recitation. In, e.g., Hurvitz's English translation the whole sūtra is 337 pages long.
2. Kieschnick 2000: 188; 178–81 for the scriptural support and precedents for this practice.
3. John Kieschnick (1997: 42; see also Benn 2007a: 62–3) says that the *Lotus Sūtra* 'may be the most influential book in all of premodern Asia'. But cf. Benn's observation that '[b]y any standards the *Lotus Sūtra* is a very odd literary work' (2007a: 54). For the *Lotus Sūtra* in Japanese art and culture, see Tamura and Kurata 1987, and Tanabe and Tanabe 1988. For a Chinese story of miracles associated with artistic representations drawn from the *Lotus Sūtra*, see Stevenson 1995: 430–2. It is striking, however, that judging by commentaries and references to the *Lotus Sūtra* in India and Tibet, the sūtra seems to have comparatively little role in Indo-Tibetan Buddhism. On the *atypical* nature of the *Lotus* when compared with other Indian Mahāyāna sūtras, see Nattier 2003a: 7, 86. Identifying the specific cultural factors behind this sūtra's importance in East Asian Buddhism but not elsewhere awaits further research.
4. All references will be to Hurvitz's translation from Kumārajīva (1976). The only complete English translation from the Sanskrit is that of Kern in the *Sacred Books of the East* series. While it is now in some ways rather dated, as the only English translation from a Sanskrit version it is still valuable. There are several other English translations, all from Kumārajīva's rendering.
5. See Nakamura (1980: 186–7); Pye (1978: 179); and Fujita (1980: 118–19). Karashima 2001: 170 argues that the composers of the *Lotus Sūtra* were village monks, or monks with 'village minds' even if they did live outside villages. They argued that everyone could obtain the Buddha's knowledge (*jñāna*), which was also known as the 'great knowledge' (*mahājñāna* = mahāyāna). They were a criticized and persecuted minority. For critical comments on Karashima's thesis, see Harrison 2003: 130, n. 28.
6. Skill-in-means is hence closely linked to compassion (*karuṇā*). They are not strictly identical, but compassion provides the motive and the context for, e.g., a Buddha to apply his skill in selecting the appropriate method or means to help sentient beings. On the whole issue of skill-in-means, see Pye 1978. Pye's approach is rather dependent upon his Japanese sources, and a traditional Japanese approach that would see all words and hence all the teachings of the Buddha as examples of his skill-in-means, appropriate to context only and hence finally false (see n. 7). This approach to skill-in-means has itself come under attack in Japan in recent years from the Critical Buddhism movement, with its awareness of Indian and Tibetan Buddhism and the evolution of Buddhist ideas in China and East Asia. Cf. the early Japanese critical modernist Tominaga Nakamoto (1715–46), who held that in reality the Buddha simply could not have taught

Mahāyāna at all, since no one person would teach such a range of views that contradict each other. Jan Nattier (2003a: 154–6, 172) points out that while the concept of 'tactical skill' (skill-in-means) is employed in the *Lotus Sūtra* with reference to a Buddha's ability to adapt his teaching to the level of the hearers, this contrasts with some of the earliest Mahāyāna sūtras on the path of the Bodhisattva, such as the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā* or *Ugraparipṛcchā Sūtra*, where it is used to refer not at all to a Buddha in relationship to others but rather to the solitary way in which Bodhisattvas skilfully practise meditation and the transference of merit in order to avoid the normal results of their meditation that might entail attaining the enlightenment of an Arhat and falling from their path to full Buddhahood. Cf. also the concept of skill (*kauśalya*) in the *Bodhisattvapiṭaka*, where it is used in connection with the Bodhisattva's skilful acquisition in meditation of the perfection of wisdom (Pagel 1995: 258; but cf. the more 'conventional' use of the few references to [skill-in-]means in the *Bodhisattvapiṭaka*, *ibid*.: 322).

7. There is an issue whether *all* the teachings of the Buddha are only skill-in-means, with the implication sometimes drawn that they are not really true. In support of this, it is sometimes said (particularly in East Asian Buddhism, with its aversion to words) that since the ultimate truth is beyond language it follows that all words must finally be false (cf. Bielefeldt 1990: 11). Thus any verbalized teaching has to be merely skill-in-means, appropriate to the context and nothing more, since it cannot actually be *true*. There is no surplus of truth to the words beyond the pragmatic context in which they are uttered. But this could give rise to problems of coherence. Take the case of the Buddha saying, in a Perfection of Wisdom sūtra 'All *dharmas* are empty of intrinsic existence'. It seems clear that it is not the case for, e.g., Nāgārjuna that while this statement may be useful in some cases, still it is no more *factually true* than its exact negation (but cf. Jizang's approach to Mādhyamika, Chapter 3 above). And if that were to be the case, what factually true situation would make it such that the statement 'All *dharmas* are empty of intrinsic existence' is no truer than its exact negation? Clearly, there can be no escaping a (claim to a) true factual situation. It seems that as far Nāgārjuna is concerned, this statement 'All *dharmas* are empty of intrinsic existence' is absolutely true (that is why it is said to be the ultimate truth). Although there may be cases where this is not the most skilled teaching to give (since it may be interpreted wrongly, perhaps nihilistically), and another teaching that is not finally true may be more skilful for a time, it remains true for Nāgārjuna that as a matter of actual fact all *dharmas* really are empty. That is their final ontological status (and indeed it may be the very dependently-originated, hence empty, nature of things that suggested or encouraged the context-dependent adaptable flexibility of skill-in-means). This empty nature of things is always true 'whether Buddhas occur or do not occur'. There is no context in which this is not factually the actual truth. In developed Mahāyāna thought in India and Tibet statements concerning wisdom, the way things really are, are contrasted with all other statements of the Buddha that are said to be *upāya*, [skill-in-]means. Thus, for example, it is sometimes said that the first five perfections (*pāramitā*) are *upāya*, with the sixth, the

perfection of wisdom, being the complementary *prajñā* (wisdom). Of course, some absolutely true statements have to be possible in order that a pragmatic, step-by-step, ladder-like ascent can take place. Ladders have to lead *somewhere*, and that somewhere has to be verbalizable with appropriate accuracy in some way or another in order to be indicated, or in order for nonverbal indications to make sense. Otherwise they would not be ladders (they would be just a pile of sticks) and ascent (any application of the concept of 'progress', and hence any application of the concept of 'skill-in-means') would be meaningless (there would be no sense to the concept of 'completing the journey'). But Nāgārjuna would be the first to agree that *whether or not to give a particular teaching*, i.e. whether it is appropriate or not, will depend upon the context and be gauged by the Buddha and acted on appropriately through his great skill-in-means. Thus the actual utterance of a statement (its verbal form) can be the result of skill-in-means (and hence relative to context) while what it says (its content) can still be absolutely, universally, true. The relative applicability of a statement does not entail (if it is true) that it is only relatively (and not absolutely) true. Skill-in-means does not in itself entail a relative or a pragmatic theory of *truth*. Thus it does not follow from the teaching of skill-in-means alone that none of the Buddha's verbalized teachings is absolutely true. This is the case even if (with some common East Asian perspectives) all the actual teachings (the actual utterances) of the Buddha were the results of his skill-in-means, flowing from his (no doubt spontaneous) assessment as to what would be the most appropriate action at the time. Hubbard 1995: 124 reminds us that the very title of the *Lotus Sūtra* speaks of it as the lotus of the *True* Dharma (*saddharma*). When the *Lotus Sūtra* speaks of the *ekayāna* (One Vehicle) it is perfectly appropriate to translate, or at least gloss, it (with Hubbard) as the 'sole truth'. As Hubbard shows brilliantly, the *Lotus Sūtra* is basically inclusivist, in that it includes other Buddhist (and perhaps non-Buddhist) teachings as appropriate at a lower level even if not true. In this it is typically Indian (we might even say Brāhmanical), incorporating rivals at a lower level on a carefully managed and structured hierarchy rather than simply negating and excluding. But its inclusivism is (again, as always in India) subordinated to a clear framework of graduated access to the actual, final, absolute and objective *truth*. Unlike the way the doctrine of [skill-in-]means is sometimes portrayed in modern writings on Buddhism, skill-in-means in the *Lotus Sūtra* is far from a doctrine of complete relativism, and total openness to the *truth* of rival views. Skill-in-means might involve a flexible *valuation* of truth (even falsehood may be appropriate out of a compassionate intention), but it does not involve a denial of the objectivity of truth, and indeed finally an exclusivist idea of where truth lies (see Hubbard 1995: 128–9). All other teachings (while sometimes valuable, and of course sometimes not) are in fact *objectively false*. Buddhahood, the only real final goal, can only be obtained through the One Vehicle (*q.v.*), *our* Vehicle, which incorporates the sole final truth. Hubbard (*ibid.*: 134, n. 9) comments that 'I have never come across [in Buddhism] a text that claims that its own teachings are merely provisionally true. There is, occasionally, the move to claim *all* doctrine, including one's own, as equally *upāya*,

but even this must be understood as the polemic or rhetorical strategy of claiming the doctrinal high ground of the universal'.

8. For a convenient discussion of *panjiao*, see Gregory 1991: Ch. 3.
9. Chang 1983: 459. During his life the Buddha had a number of experiences that would normally be explained through 'bad karma'. How was this possible, given that he was a Buddha and therefore arguably free from unpleasant karmic results? This issue seems to have caused some problems among exegetes. The doctrine of skill-in-means provides one solution. These cases were just a show for pedagogical purposes. For a discussion of the Buddha's 'bad karma', see Xing 2005: 106 ff.
10. See, for example, the *Bodhisattvabhūmi* in Pagel 1995: 173. Hence skill-in-means often forms the basis of stories of the 'trickster' or 'misunderstood monk' throughout the Mahāyāna tradition. A Chinese monk, for example, might behave in a totally unexpected and disreputable manner. He might get drunk, dally with women, swear, eat vast quantities of meat, burn the Buddhist scriptures when he is cold, behave like a fool and so on. But something extraordinary shows that things are not as they appear (perhaps he is found meditating at night with an unearthly glow around him, or perhaps he brings one of the animals he has eaten back to life). Really the monk is an advanced Bodhisattva, acting in this way for some reason known only to himself, but certainly for the benefit of sentient beings. The model for these stories, particularly in East Asia, is often the figure of Vimalakīrti in the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa Sūtra*, a rich merchant Bodhisattva who (while not obviously a trickster himself) visited drinking dens and brothels in order to teach the Dharma. A somewhat similar case in Chinese Buddhism are the stories of, e.g., an elderly monk who appears – who knows from where? – to help a lost pilgrim and is subsequently realized to be the Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī himself. For the trickster in Chinese Buddhism, see Kieschnick 1997: 51 ff. For Vimalakīrti in China, see Demiéville 1962. The Chinese trickster stories have some similarities with the stories of the 'one of achievement', the *siddha*, in Indo-Tibetan tantric Buddhism. The two come together in the case of the great Indian tantric master in China, Śubhakarasiṃha, who (so the story runs) ate meat and was always drunk and vomiting on the mat, yet even while half-drunk showed the compassion of a true Bodhisattva (Kieschnick 1997: 59, but cf. n. 237; interestingly, in the light of the discussion in Chapter 1 above of Indian Buddhist monasteries at the time of the inception of the Mahāyāna, Kieschnick (*ibid.*: 64) also observes that there is some later evidence that monasteries in China themselves actually produced and sold wine). For good surveys of Mahāyāna ethics and skill-in-means in relationship to the ethical issues involved, see Keown 1992: esp. Ch. 6, and Harvey 2000: Ch. 3 (at the time of writing, a further book by Harvey on Buddhist ethics is forthcoming which it seems will also treat this and other topics of Mahāyāna ethics (Harvey 2008)).
11. Note that these stories all apply to the Buddha in previous lives, on his long and heroic career as a Bodhisattva. They are Jātaka tales. The sūtra is not saying that, e.g., Śākyamuni Buddha needed to do such things. On the Theravāda, particularly Abhidhamma

(but probably Mainstream Buddhist in general), approach to killing, see Gethin 2004. He argues that the Abhidhamma, and commentarial, psychological analysis entails that it is impossible that intentionally killing a living being could be wholly an act of compassion. Gethin discusses briefly (2004: 189; see also Gethin 2007: 70–1) the *Upāyakauśalya Sūtra*, and suggests that it may have been a deliberate challenge to Mainstream Buddhist ethics.

12. See Welch 1972: 280 ff., esp. 284–7; Demiéville 1973: 261 ff. Such justification for killing had been used already by many Chinese monks both against, and in support of, the earlier twentieth century Japanese occupation in China. See Yu 2005: e.g. p. 50.
13. Note the association of skill-in-means here with the Buddhas 'concealing their glory'. It suggests some sort of conceptual association between the teaching of skill-in-means and the so-called docetism of the Mahāsāṃghika supramundane doctrine (see Chapter 1 above). Application of skill-in-means has sometimes been used historically (as in the case of the Sixth Dalai Lama in Tibet), and also in the context of modern Buddhism in the West, to justify, e.g., sexual or aggressive behaviour by Dharma teachers (who, it is often said, should be seen as enlightened Buddhas) which would not normally be considered appropriate. For cases recorded in the Pali Canon where the Buddha apparently showed anger, see Xing 2005: 11–12. In terms of philosophical ethics, one wonders if there are *any* acts a Buddha or advanced Bodhisattva might not (in theory) do, if compassionate motivation and action in context demanded it. For instance, perpetrating mass murder in the interests of compassionately helping someone; cf. the case of Aum Shinrikyō in Japan, where attempted mass murder and other acts of violence were justified at least in part on the basis of the enlightened wisdom of its leader, Shōkō Asahara, who was held to be beyond good and evil (Reader 2000: 137–41, 145–6). These are acts that we might normally consider completely wrong. Is the fact that most people would consider the acts wrong merely a matter of their being unenlightened (and hence finally a matter simply of being bound by conventions)? If it is argued that, e.g., a Buddha nevertheless would not do such things (and such an argument would need to take into consideration textual sources that suggest that because of the supremacy of compassion the occasion might require him to do so), what other overriding factors might be at play here, in addition to compassion and compassionate motivation? There are other interesting philosophical problems that might arise in this context, one of which is to delimit the range of compassionate concern. For example, supposing the *only* option in order really to help a large number of people were to torture horribly (say, flay alive while his children looked on) one crippled and sick, and indeed rather immoral, person? It is a perfectly possible example, and anyway an ethical theory should be able to cope with even unlikely hypothetical situations. Or what about killing horribly 20 people in order to help in a particularly kind and benevolent manner another 20? Or 21? What would, say, a Buddha or the Bodhisattva of Compassion, Avalokiteśvara, do? Would the doctrine of skill-in-means morally justify (i.e. define as right, good and proper) the act of torturing? (Normally one would say that whatever a Buddha or an advanced

Bodhisattva does is good. But cf. the Tiantai doctrine of the inherent evil of the *tathāgatagarbha* mentioned in Chapter 5 above. Ethical issues related to skill-in-means seem to have prompted at least in part the evolution of this perspective.)

14. See Nattier 2003b: 194 for a suggestion of the origins of this One Vehicle notion in previous developments particularly in Pure Land Buddhism in India (see also Chapter 10 below).
15. There was a dispute in China over whether the One Buddha Vehicle (the 'sole truth') is the third of the three vehicles, or some sort of transcendental finality beyond language with all three (therefore including Mahāyāna itself) simply provisional teachings. Clearly if 'vehicle' is taken as the *means*, then not only the two 'lower vehicles' but also a great deal of Mahāyāna itself must be pedagogical devices that lead up to the goal of Buddhahood (or to the articulation of the final truth). In this sense taken as a whole all three vehicles would seem to be pedogogical and therefore arguably skill-in-means. But as the vehicle that takes Buddhahood as its goal, where Buddhahood is the only final goal, it looks as if the One Buddha Vehicle of the *Lotus Sūtra* is in fact the Mahāyāna, when understood not as one of three alternatives (i.e. as the Bodhisattvayāna in opposition to the Śrāvakayāna or the Pratyekabuddhayāna) but *in terms of the goal aimed at* the only true and final vehicle. Inasmuch as they take provisional *goals* other teachings are pedogogical in a different way from the pedogogy of the Mahāyāna, which does not have a provisional goal but rather aims at the final goal. In light of this it seems to me that the *Lotus* intends the Mahāyāna, when understood correctly, to be the sole truth, the One Buddha Vehicle. Hubbard 1995: 124 points out that the term *upāya* is never used self-referentially in the *Lotus Sūtra*. *Other* teachings are the results of the Buddha's skill-in-means, leading up in appropriate practical stages to the actual truth, the final teaching of the *Lotus Sūtra* itself, the One Vehicle of the Mahāyāna. For the dispute in East Asia, cf. Fujita 1975, and Bielefeldt 1990: 11 ff. Note that as Nattier 2000: 94, n. 68 points out, the doctrine of One Vehicle in opposition to three vehicles was never universally accepted in Indian Mahāyāna. Many (particularly relatively early) sūtras and other sources accept that while a small minority may become Bodhisattvas, and it is indeed the most heroic path, it is not necessary for all to do so, nor will they.
16. Note the suggestion of Sadāparibhūta's *conceit* in all of this. In making a prediction of Buddhahood to all he meets, Sadāparibhūta is usurping the role of a Buddha. It is a Buddha who, traditionally, makes predictions of Buddhahood to Bodhisattvas. Hence there is the suggestion that Sadāparibhūta, either in actuality or perhaps through some sort of (proto?) *tathāgatagarbha* doctrine, considers himself already to be a Buddha. Viewed in this light, one can understand the annoyance of his critics.
17. Did the father/Buddha really not lie (i.e. tell something that is false)? Or can lying be justified through a compassionate intention and a beneficial result?
18. On all of these parables, see Pye 1978: 37 ff.
19. Zimmermann has recently suggested (1999: 156–68, building on a suggestion by Takasaki) that the *Tathāgatagarbha Sūtra* was aware of the *Lotus Sūtra*, and explicitly sought in the

doctrine of the *tathāgatagarbha* to explain how it is that, as the *Lotus Sūtra* claims, everyone has it within them (theoretically) to become a Buddha. Zimmermann (2002: 81) seems to assume that the *Lotus Sūtra* does indeed teach an eternal Buddha. Hence the evolution of the *tathāgatagarbha* doctrine in, e.g., the *Tathāgatagarbha Sūtra* was an attempt to answer the sort of issues I have indicated, a response in part to a problem thrown up by the *Lotus Sūtra*. Thus the *Lotus Sūtra* would represent an early stage in the evolution of the *tathāgatagarbha* theory. It has been suggested also that there may be some sort of link between the *Lotus Sūtra* and the Mahāyāna *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* ('Nirvāṇa Sūtra', in Buswell 2004). Zimmermann certainly shows some interesting and suggestive similarities between the *Lotus Sūtra* and the *Tathāgatagarbha Sūtra*. But we know so little about chronology and contacts between Mahāyāna traditions in ancient India that suggestion of (even conceptual) links and echoes here should at the moment be treated with caution (as Zimmermann himself realizes).

20. Note also that the *Lotus Sūtra* speaks of many Buddhas, not just Śākyamuni. As it stands this would suggest that the *Lotus* does not see Śākyamuni as an eternal 'cosmic' Buddha on the model of the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*'s Mahāvairocana.
21. Cf. Hubbard 1995: 125–6 for examples of the *Lotus Sūtra*'s polemic – placed in the mouth of the Buddha – detailing the horrible things that will happen to those who reject or disparage this sūtra.
22. There are many wonderful stories recounted in the *Hokkegenki*. The sūtra protects from injury or death in battle (Dykstra 1983: 132); a blind devotee regains her sight (*ibid.*: 138). For a Chinese case of an alcoholic monk devotee of the *Lotus Sūtra* ministered to by divine young boys, see Stevenson 1995: 440. But the association of the *Lotus Sūtra* with magical power may not always lie in the sūtra alone. It may also depend on the ascetic practices of its devotees. In contemporary Japan, for example, ascetics from the Nichiren (*q.v.*) tradition practise cold-water asceticism in the winter while chanting from the sūtra in order to develop their healing and exorcistic powers (Reader 1991: 123; *ibid.*: Ch. 5 for further discussion of the connection in Japanese religion between asceticism and power). The same can be found in, e.g., Chinese Buddhism – see Kieschnick 1997: Ch. 1 – and of course in India. For a recent wider study of asceticism in religion, see Flood 2004.
23. Cf. another sūtra, known as the *Buddhabalādhānapratihāryavikurvāṇanirdeśa*, found at Gilgit and belonging with the *Lotus Sūtra* (Schopen 1978: 334–5). The importance of faith and trust in the *Lotus Sūtra* and its teachings, explicitly said to be beyond reason but vouchsafed by the Buddha, is noted by Hubbard (1995: 127–8; cf. Bielefeldt 1990: 11–12) For Nichiren on the centrality of faith in the *Lotus Sūtra* see, e.g., Gosho Translation Committee 2003: 510–11; cf. Stone 1998: 139 ff. To doubt what the Buddha says, and the miracles mentioned in the sūtra, leads, according to Nichiren, to the lowest hell. Practising the *Lotus Sūtra* without faith is impossible. For reflections on the sheer impact of the *Lotus Sūtra* when reason and disbelief are surrendered, and the role of faith, see Benn 2007a: 55.

24. See Fujita 1980; on Pure Land Buddhism, see Chapter 10 below. Historically, in both China and Japan Tiantai/Tendai monks have often been very active in promoting Pure Land practice and the cult of Buddha Amitābha, although as we shall see in Japan by the Kamakura (1185–1333) period Nichiren, from the side of the *Lotus*, and Hōnen and Shinran, from the side of devotion to Amitābha, urged exclusive adherence to their practice. Nichiren loathed Hōnen and any suggestion that the cult of Buddha Amitābha should supplement the Śākyamuni of the *Lotus Sūtra*.
25. Dykstra 1983: 116–17; a story like this is a useful antidote to a 'holier-than-thou' attitude.
26. Dykstra 1983: 317. On Avalokiteśvara, see Chapter 10 below; cf. also in the last chapter of the *Lotus* the additional protection associated with Samantabhadra.
27. Lamotte 1962: Ch. 6; cf. Paul 1979: 224 ff. The role of the nāga princess in the *Lotus Sūtra* – along with its many other benefits – no doubt impressed Empress Wu (*q.v.*) who, on one occasion, ordered 3,000 copies of this sūtra to be made.
28. For the contrast between the Indian attitude to sūtra hyperbole and the Chinese attitude to the classics as a literal model for behaviour, see Benn 2007a: 55, 200. For many examples of how literally the Buddhist sūtras could be taken in Japan, see Myōe Shōnin (1173–1232) in Tanabe 1992. Remember that the *Lotus Sūtra* does not appear to have been an important sūtra in the history of specifically *Indian* Buddhism. But it became very important in China. Along with its promises and magical powers, one reason for Chinese enthusiasm for the example of self-immolation in the *Lotus Sūtra* may be because burning the body to produce rain was an old pre-Buddhist practice in China (Benn 1998: 310–12; 2007a: 176–9). As it developed, Buddhists in China adopted other methods of damaging or destroying the body in addition to burning. According to Benn ('Self-immolation', in Buswell 2004), 'There are also accounts of people who starved themselves to death, disemboweled themselves, drowned in rivers or oceans, leapt from cliffs or trees, or fed themselves to wild animals. Although drowning seems to have been relatively common in Japan, auto-cremation was the most commonly attested form of self-immolation in China'. In Japan, the young Myōe Shōnin twice sought explicitly to emulate the Buddha's own activities in his previous life as a Bodhisattva by offering himself as food to hungry beasts. Although Myōe sat in the charnel grounds all night meditating on the Buddha, no animals wanted to eat him. He also sought to offer his flesh to a leper who to his disappointment unfortunately had died before Myōe could find him (Tanabe 1992: 52, 54). Myōe subsequently went on rigorous solitary mountain retreat and cut off his right ear while contemplating a picture of Butsugen-butsumo, the 'mother of all the Buddhas', in order to prove his true commitment to humility (*ibid.*: 55–6, 59–60; for a discussion of cases of religious suicide in Japan, see Moerman 2007). Some cases of offering flesh are directly altruistic, like the Chinese monk who offered starving villagers slices of his own flesh to eat (Benn 2007a: 28–30), or another who burnt his arm to bring peace and rain (*ibid.*: 154). It is not clear whether the East Asian custom of writing the scriptures in one's own blood should be placed in the same class

(see Kieschnick 1997: 40–1; note a much-treasured 'copy of the *Lotus Sūtra* in the blood of the monk Hongchu'). For translation of several Chinese hagiographies of death by burning in connection with the *Lotus Sūtra*, see Stevenson 1995: 432–6. This fascinating topic is, alas, too large for more than mention here. For a clear short treatment, see Kieschnick 1997: 37–50. For a full study of the subject in China, see Benn 2007a (where the *Lotus Sūtra* is the subject of Ch. 2), and also his bibliographical references (Jan 1965 is still very useful).

29. On miracles, see Benn 2007a: 70–6; 155–6, particularly on the miracle of the imperishable tongue, the idea suggested by the *Lotus* itself (and also the *Dazhidulun*) that the faculty of speech of one who recites the sūtra becomes incorruptible and hence is not damaged by the process of autocremation. On the transformative and (arguably) beneficial dimensions of self-immolation in China, a 'performative aspect of the religion', see *ibid*.: 201–2.
30. For burning and ordination ceremonies, see Benn 1998: esp. 301 ff.
31. Healing, however, is not always so rapid. In the early 1990s I was visited by a plastic surgeon from the Burns Unit of Stoke Mandeville Hospital investigating severe incense burns on the arms of several Japanese Buddhist monks based in England and requiring hospital treatment to aid recovery. The short article, with photographs, that resulted is Budny *et al.* 1991. This contrasts with a hagiographical account of, e.g., a thumb miraculously growing back (on the model of Indian sūtra accounts of self-immolation) after being burnt off (Benn 2007a: 146; on the phenomenon of finger-burning, see also *ibid*.: 149–51).
32. Stevenson 1995: 435–6 (cf. Benn 2007a: 75). On the hagiographical theme of absence of pain – in the self-immolation the body has now become that of a great Bodhisattva or a Buddha, an object of religious practice, and is hence beyond pain – see Benn (2007a: 58).
33. 'A deep loathing for the physical body' (Stevenson 1995: 434) is repeatedly mentioned as one of the praiseworthy conditions particularly for whole self-immolation, e.g. 'The body is like a poisonous plant; it would really be right to burn it and extinguish its life', quoted in Benn 2007a: 3; Sengyu (Seng-yü) thought that falling into the three types of lower rebirth was due to having emotions and a physical body (*ibid*.: 35–6). This loathing is seen as an indication of nonattachment to the physical, a willingness to renounce for deeply-felt devotional reasons (perhaps also as an indication of a Bodhisattva's skilful compassion for others) what Tibetans commonly call 'our precious human body'. In China it was widely held that offering one's own flesh led to rebirth in the Pure Land (Kieschnick 1997: 43; cf. Benn 2007a: 173–4). But Kieschnick also notes a more positive attitude to the body (or at least to *a* body, if not to our ordinary physical body) among Chinese Buddhists, the attempt to *replace* the decaying and polluted physical body with an adamantine or undecaying body of a Buddha (see also Benn 2007a: 47–8; cf. the Daoist quest to develop an immortal body). Hence, as Benn points out, autocremation was regarded not as simply termination (suicide) but rather as a

transformation, replacing one sort of body with another (*ibid.*: 62). For an overview of Mahāyāna approaches to the body, see Williams 1997 (cf. the paper on Theravāda monastic attitudes to the body by Steven Collins in the same volume).

34. One of the fears of the Confucian Han Yu in his *Memorial on the Bone of the Buddha* was that visible support for Buddhism by the emperor might lead to a rash of religious enthusiasm and lack of proper order, with people burning the tops of their heads and burning off their fingers. This is indeed what happened (see Kieschnick 1997: 35–7). Burning oneself, particularly fingers, in the presence of relics seems to have been especially popular. But damaging the body, a precious inheritance from one's ancestors, was always controversial in China (on its *approval* when itself presented as an act of filial devotion, see Kieschnick 1997: 49–50). One emperor, in the tenth century, banned self-immolation altogether (see Benn 2007a: 116–17). For a Buddhist reply to Han Yu, see Benn 2007a: 160–2.
35. Note also the case of self-immolation by a Chinese monk in 1948 as a protest against the Chinese Communist suppression of Buddhism (Welch 1967: 327). For possible earlier Chinese parallels, see Benn 2007a: 187–9; 2007b.
36. The *Lotus Sūtra* was not the only influence on Buddhist self-immolation. In the case of autocremation, descriptions of the Buddha's own cremation (after his death) seem to have played a part (Benn 2007a: 37–8), and there is also support for the practice from other Mahāyāna sūtras like the *Samādhirāja* and *Karuṇāpuṇḍarīka* (see *ibid.*: 65–9; for *Samādhirāja*, see also Braarvig 2002: 145–50). Other important Indian influences are jātaka-type tales of the heroic acts of the Bodhisattva cultivating extraordinary deeds on the path to Buddhahood, such as the famous case in, e.g., the *Suvarṇabhāsottama* where the Bodhisattva gives his body to a starving tigress unable to feed her cubs (offering the body to tigers was another popular means of self-immolation, or attempted self-immolation, in China; see Benn 2007a: 25–8, 140–1). Such Jātaka tales were originally in the Indian context *descriptive* accounts of the heroic deeds of Śākyamuni in his Bodhisattva career, intended to stimulate respect and devotion towards the Buddha and his attainments, and the superiority of Buddhism over rival religious paths. But in Mahāyāna the Bodhisattva path becomes *prescriptive*. In China, at least, and later further East Asia, where Mahāyāna Buddhism became mainstream, such prescriptions – even when based on Indian descriptive hyperbole – were taken very seriously as descriptions of expected, if heroic, conduct by those who aspired to the path of the Bodhisattva. For an interesting study of Indian jātaka-type tales of Bodhisattvas giving up their bodies, see Ohnuma 1998. Cf. Benn 2007a: 108–9, 196–7; for some direct Chinese parallels, see Benn 2007a: 92–5; see also the comments on the jātaka-type tales in Gethin 2007: 69 – in common with some of the Chinese sources Gethin makes the point that these Bodhisattvas were usually *not* monks, and hence not subject to the Vinaya. On Indian sources for the medicinal offering of (one's own) human flesh to save a life, see Durt 1998; this was condemned, at least for monastic consumption, in the Vinaya; the offering itself by a Bodhisattva is warmly approved in several Mahāyāna texts – Durt notes a change in

approach emerging in the Jātakas. Cf. Kieschnick 1997: 49–50, and Benn 2007a: 28–31, 191 for the act in China. For the specific connection of Chinese 'apocryphal' sūtras such as the *Fanwang Jing* and *Shouleng'yan Jing* with the active encouragement of self-immolation by ordinary monks and, be it noted, nuns, see Benn 1998: esp. 312 ff. (in the fifth century nuns seem to have been at the forefront of the practice: see Benn 2007a: 42; cf. *ibid*.: 96–7, 168–70). The *Fanwang Jing* states that no one is really a renunciate Bodhisattva who has not set fire to the body, or burnt off an arm or a finger as an offering to the Buddha. The *Shouleng'yan Jing* states that through such acts of burning a monk determined to cultivate meditative absorption (*samādhi*) may eliminate all past karmic debts and become enlightened, attaining the perfect body of a Buddha (Benn 1998: 299–300 – he points out that the idea of a single practice sufficient for enlightenment is typical of Chinese apocrypha). Benn argues that the creation of these apocryphal sūtras in China may have been at least in part explicitly to justify such acts, and a response to the strong condemnation of burning the body by monks and nuns in Yijing's early-eighth-century account of Indian Buddhist customs. Yijing (with the specific intention of conveying whether Chinese monastic practices matched those of the Indian Buddhist homeland) pointed out that the autocremation in the *Lotus Sūtra* applied to a very advanced lay Bodhisattva, and not ordinary monks and nuns (on Yijing's criticisms, see also Kieschnick 1997: 47, and Benn 2007a: 115–16). The response in China from those in favour of such practices was to create apocryphal sūtras in which the Buddha particularly approves of burning and other acts of self-immolation even (or particularly) among those who are monks and nuns and *not* advanced Bodhisattvas. This trumped Yijing's account, and any argument against self-immolation based simply on the exceptional case of Bhaiṣajyarāja in the *Lotus Sūtra*. The Buddha's statements in the *Fanwang Jing* and *Shouleng'yan Jing* were used in the tenth century in an important intellectual justification of the practice of self-immolation (at least in part on the basis of the perfection of giving, or *dānapāramitā*) by the Chan master Yanshou. For differences between self-immolation through burning, and giving away one's body to help others, see Benn 2007a: 4–5; cf. 60, 112, 158–9. On Yanshou's (and others') defence of self-immolation, see *ibid*.: Ch. 4; cf. also Benn 2007a: 50–1, 66, 99 ff. As far as we know, it is not a practice Yanshou himself indulged in. If Benn is right, the not-infrequent burning of the body, including rather dramatic death through complete self-immolation, in Chinese Buddhism has been justified by its supporters and perpetrators at least in part on the basis of a strongly positive approval attributed to the Buddha (as Benn 2007a: 55 says, with reference to the Chinese attitude to the *Lotus Sūtra* itself, '[t]he words came from the "golden mouth" of the Buddha himself, so they were true however fantastic they may have seemed'), in sūtras that we now know were effectively Chinese forgeries. It is interesting in this context to note that in the seventeenth century Zhuhong (Chu-hung) was still able to argue that complete self-immolation by burning is in reality inspired not by the Buddha but by Māra ('the Devil'), who prevents the feeling of pain. Such acts lead to horrible rebirths in some nasty hot hells (Benn 1998: 317–18; 2007: 197–8). For Yanshou,

self-immolation is a true Mahāyāna practice, in opposition to the condemnation of that sort of thing in the 'Hīnayāna' Vinaya, and he employs an argument from universal emptiness to suggest that autocremation by Buddhists is beyond relative and provisional worldly categories of right and wrong. It also (Yanshou claims) shows absence of Self and absence of intrinsic existence (Benn 2007a: 118–19, 125–6). For more on the controversy in East Asian Buddhism for and against such ascetic acts, see Kleine 2006.

37. For relatively recent book-length studies of Tiantai thought in China, see Swanson 1989 and Ziporyn 2000.
38. The finality of the *Lotus Sūtra* is made clearer in a sūtra given the English title of *Sūtra of Immeasurable Meanings*, which in East Asian Buddhism is classed as an introduction to the *Lotus Sūtra*. An appendix to the *Lotus* is the *Sūtra on the Method of Contemplating Bodhisattva Samantabhadra*, taking up the theme of Samantabhadra from the *Lotus*'s final chapter. The three sūtras together form in East Asian Buddhism the 'threefold *Lotus Sūtra*'. These two additional sūtras are unknown from any Indic source.
39. The Buddha is indeed the universe. The tenth-century Korean Tiantai monk Chegwan quotes (interestingly) the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra:* 'The mind, the Buddha, and all beings, these three have no essential difference' (Chegwan 1983: 147). As we noted in Chapter 5, n. 47 above, Tiantai also strongly asserted the Buddha-nature in all things, including plants and even rocks.
40. On Tendai in Japan, see Swanson 1987. For Saichō, see Groner 2000.
41. Indeed, in the 760s, one handsome monk from the Hossō (Yogācāra) tradition, Dōkyō, with the connivance of the empress became first chancellor of state and then 'Dharma king'. He was granted military powers, and attempted to have himself declared emperor. He died in exile. On the similarities between this Japanese empress and Empress Wu, see Chen 2002: 116. 'Nara Buddhism' is the Buddhism of the Nara era (710–84). In the periodization of Japanese Buddhism commonly adopted it was followed by 'Heian Buddhism' (794–1184), and 'Kamakura Buddhism' (1185–1333). Tendai, along with the Japanese tantric tradition of Shingon, were characteristic developments of the Heian era. The Buddhisms of Dōgen, Nichiren, Hōnen, and Shinran (see Chapter 10 below) were characteristic of the Kamakura era.
42. But for similar socially beneficial actions for the wider community in China, see the case of Jueqing (fl. *c.* 1341–67) who 'stressed the merits of practices such as surfacing roads, digging wells, donating hot water, running tea stalls, and providing acupuncture and medicine' (Benn 2007a: 187; cf. 191–2). In Japan Eizon (1201–90) and his disciple Ninshō (1217–1303) were active 'in work among outcasts and others, and established animal sanctuaries, hospitals for lepers and animals, and feeding stations for the poor' (Tanabe 1992: 45).
43. Welch 1972: 281; Demiéville 1973: 293. Cf. Benn 2007a: 84–90 on self-immolation, rather than killing others, in defence of the community.
44. See Lopez 1995b: Ch. 19. On the phenomenon of 'temple warriors' at this time in Japanese history, who were by no means all properly ordained monks, see Adolphson 2007.

45. More recently, in Japan, with reference to his own brand of syncretistic Buddhism (Aum Shinrikyō) a rather similar justification for murder was used by Shōkō Asahara (Reader 2000: 146).
46. Sperling 2001: 318. The Fifth Dalai Lama's use of military action was specifically in support, not of Buddhism as such, but of his dGe lugs school interests and his own rule of Tibet. In twelfth-century Tibet Zhang Rinpoche's disciples waged war on his behalf and, Sperling notes, his disciples experienced religious visions on the battlefield (*ibid*.: 320; see also Kapstein 2006: 106). At the beginning of the twentieth century the Thirteenth Dalai Lama was also in favour of Tibetan military action (*ibid*.: 324–5). Sperling argues that the current (Fourteenth) Dalai Lama's nonviolent approach to ethics and politics is strongly influenced by his admiration for Gandhi, and he points out that while in general a particular type of nonviolence *is* part of Tibetan Buddhism, complete nonviolence in the Gandhian sense traditionally is not. In terms of skill-in-means there is no reason why it should be. But the Fourteenth Dalai Lama could have been influenced also by a growing awareness of the doctrinal position of Mainstream Buddhist ethics. For a perceptive recent essay on the strongly condemnatory early and Mainstream Buddhist attitudes to war and political violence, see Gethin 2007. See also Harvey 2000: Ch. 6.
47. One observer, Ryōhen (1194–1252) lamented life at his own monastery, 'where monks were dedicated to the pursuit of imperial favour, drinking, games, and the affection of young boys' (Tanabe 1992: 35). A legend associates the introduction of male homosexuality into Japan with the great Buddhist practitioner of the Tantras, Kūkai (774–835; Schalow, in Cabezón 1992b: 215).
48. For Shinran's calculation, see Dobbins 1989: 36. Shinran's figure corresponds more closely to those developed in China. See Nattier 1991. For an interesting study of the influence of natural disasters and climate change on Chinese Buddhists' reflections concerning the coming of the 'Last Days', and the intensification of religious fervour it involved, see Barrett 2007.
49. Note, however, that Dōgen, to take just one example, protested against this pessimism of *mappō* (LaFleur 1983: 3–4).
50. For a collection of recent papers on Nichiren, see Habito and Stone 1999.
51. See the Emmerick trans. in *Suvarṇabhāsottama Sūtra* (1970: 23 ff.); also Gosho Translation Committee 2003: 7–8. Cf. also Lopez 1995b: 246–7.
52. See Petzold 1977: 94 ff.; quotation (from Matsunaga and Matsunaga 1974/6, vol. 2: 142) in Hubbard 1995: 130. As a summary this was drawn from Nichiren's writings by his later followers (Stone 1994: 233). On Nichiren 'exclusivism', see Stone 1994.
53. On the Nichiren tradition's view that the only real Buddha is Śākyamuni, and not imaginary Buddhas like Mahāvairocana (or Amitābha), see also the so-called 'Matsumoto debate' (Lopez 1995b: 244–5).
54. Petzold 1977: 92 ff.; Welch 1972: 281, 284, and nn. 73–4; Demiéville 1973: 292. The story of king Anala can be found in the Cleary translation (1984–7), vol. 3: 118–21. But the multiple dismemberments, hideous tortures and executions ordered by Anala

are really of illusory beings, a collective hallucination conjured up by the Bodhisattva king Anala using his skill-in-means in order to terrify people into virtuous behaviour. Although the people of his realm are particularly vicious, really Anala harms no one. Indeed, Anala himself points out the wonderful style in which he lives as a king. Such good karmic results, he suggests, could not come to the horrible villain he appeared to be. Such wealth, it appears, shows him to be *de facto* virtuous. The good Buddhist Bodhisattva king just appears out of his skill to harm others, when that strategy is the only one calculated to bring about the desired beneficial results. But this approach to violence may be in a certain tension with Mahāyāna ideas that all things, and therefore *all people*, are finally really illusions. Thus, as the *Susthitamatiparipṛcchā Sūtra* puts it, there is really no killing at all, and no unfavourable karmic result from killing. That is how an advanced Bodhisattva, who sees things correctly, perceives them (see Chang 1983: 66–7). For a perceptive discussion of a range of Buddhist attitudes to kingship and punishment, with the invariable violence that kingship and punishment seem to entail, see Zimmermann 2006 (Zimmermann appears to omit discussion of the case of king Anala). Candrakīrti, for example, seems to have considered that kingship all but inevitably entails violence incompatible with Buddhist moral principles. But it was always important for Buddhists to keep the support of kings if at all possible. The duty of a king not to overlook evil deeds but to exact appropriate punishment (with no mention of nonviolence) is mentioned in the *Suvarṇabhāsottama Sūtra* (*ibid*.: 226). The *Bodhisattvabhūmi* holds that a Bodhisattva who, where necessary, causes others pain out of compassion thereby gains merit (*ibid*.: 229). But, contrary to the implications of the story of king Anala, at least one other sūtra gives pragmatic reasons (such as his public image) for a king to eschew mutilations and execution (*ibid*.: 233).

55. As we saw in Chapter 6 above, Fazang too seems to have considered himself a great Bodhisattva who, in the interests of Buddhism, could infringe the common Buddhist moral code. For different views on *which* Bodhisattvas are permitted to infringe the normal moral rules, and whether breaking the rules is *obligatory* for those who are so permitted, see Harvey 2000: 140, and references.
56. For a short article on Buddhism and the martial arts, see Powell, 'Martial Arts', in Buswell 2004. Like the use of the mace by battling bishops in medieval Europe, seventh-century Buddhist monks at Shaolin apparently rather favoured the cudgel since not being metal or sharp they were not really using a weapon. See also McFarlane 1994.
57. Welch 1972: 278. Although there was initially some Buddhist opposition, there was widespread support among Japanese Buddhists, including apparently some very distinguished figures such as D. T. Suzuki, for twentieth-century Japanese miltary expansion and for Japanese involvement in the Second World War (Victoria 1997). The president of the Buddhist Taishō University said in 1938: '[T]he spirit of Mahāyāna Buddhism is not so stiff as to call war as such a breaking of precepts. Of course, if Japan were fighting an unjust war, it would be inappropriate to follow along, but it is a holy war for the sake of Eastern peace; Shākyamuni Buddha himself waged a war of justice in

his past life. . . . If Japan were to be led in accordance with a precept so stiff as to ban killing altogether, it would collapse' (Machida 1999: 155).

58. There are also two inscriptions, originating from the sixth Tiantai patriarch. The one says 'Those who vex or trouble [the practitioners of the Law] will have their heads split into seven pieces'. The other reads 'Those who give alms [to them] will enjoy good fortune surpassing the ten honourable titles' (English Buddhist Dictionary Committee 2002: 256). That the heads of his detractors did not in fact shatter into seven pieces, as predicted by the *Lotus Sūtra* itself, does seem to have caused Nichiren some puzzlement. Cf. the Chinese story in which a lustful district office manager who sought to molest a beautiful nun who was a devotee of the *Lotus Sūtra* had among other things his eyebrows, beard, sideburns and penis fall off (Stevenson 1995: 444).
59. The importance of chanting the title of the *Lotus Sūtra* appears to have developed in Japan, certainly well prior to Nichiren, but without much Chinese precedent. See Stone 1998.
60. The legacy of Nichiren has meant that over the years in spite of frequent compromise at least some in the Nichiren traditions have been fearlessly outspoken in opposing political authority where it went against what they believed to be right on the basis of their understanding of the *Lotus Sūtra*. For a hagiographical account of one follower of Nichiren, Nisshin (1407–88), who was persecuted and apparently tortured for his uncompromising faith, see Stone, in Tanabe 1999: Ch. 36. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the Nichiren *fujufuse* ('neither receiving nor giving') movement refused all collaboration or cooperation with rulers who were held to be nonbelievers (in the *Lotus Sūtra*). They took no alms from such rulers, and in a way that was untypical of Buddhism in Japan they refused to take part in religious rituals, or collaborate with other religious practitioners, for their benefit. They were thus seen as a threat to the welfare and harmony of the state. *Fujufuse* advocates were driven underground and often severely persecuted (for a popular account see, e.g., Montgomery 1991: 164–6, and for a more detailed scholarly study of Nichiren 'exclusivism' and *fujufuse*, see particularly Stone 1994, esp. 243 ff.).
61. See Hubbard 1995: 126–8 for the importance of preaching, and the persecution of its preachers, in the *Lotus Sūtra*. Hubbard draws attention to the strong missionary nature of Buddhism, seen particularly here in the *Lotus Sūtra*. He suggests that the primary function of *upāya*, when it is not being used as a 'sectarian strategy of legitimation', lies in its role in preaching. The *Lotus Sūtra*, he comments, often reads like a pep talk or training manual for missionaries of an unpopular [Mahāyāna] faith. Finally, Hubbard says (*ibid*.: 129), 'there is a clear and forceful denial that the potential for Buddhahood can be realized outside the teachings of the *Lotus Sūtra*; hence ultimately we are presented with a negation of the usefulness or efficacy of any but its teachings and a clear rejection of the earlier teachings. The denial is also accompanied by polemical language of the strongest sort, argued with a missionary zeal for conversion, even to the point of anticipating persecution as though it were proof of one's own salvation'. See *ibid*.: 129–32 for a discussion of all this in the context of Nichiren.

62. Anesaki, in Petzold 1977: 58; see also 43–4; for other statements by Nichiren of his importance, see, e.g., Gosho Translation Committee 2003: 551, 574. Nichiren elsewhere described himself as the 'pillar and beam of Japan. Doing away with me [Nichiren] is doing away with the pillar and beam of Japan' (English Buddhist Dictionary Committee 2002: 442).
63. For *shakubuku* in Nichiren and its Japanese background, see Stone 1994: 233 ff. It is described by Soka Gakkai as 'the Buddhist method of leading people, particularly its opponents, to the correct Buddhist teaching by refuting their erroneous views and eliminating their attachment to opinions they have formed' (English Buddhist Dictionary Committee 2002: 580–1). The same source, however, denies that it is 'a form of verbal or rhetorical aggression'. Rather, it is 'an expression of reverence for the truth that everyone possesses a Buddha nature, and of compassion for people'. For *shakubuku* in the modern period, see Stone 1994: 246 ff. Nichiren seems to have thought of it as a form of the Bodhisattva's compassion for suffering sentient beings, and any persecution that resulted as showing the Bodhisattva's willingness to suffer for others (Stone 1994: 235).
64. On support in some Nichiren circles for aggressive Japanese militarism, see Stone 1994: 251–2.

Chapter 8 On the bodies of the Buddha

1. *Susthitamatiparipṛcchā Sūtra*, in Chang 1983: 65 ff.
2. For a book-length study of the evolution of the concept of the Buddha up to the emergence of the three-body (*trikāya*) theory, see Xing 2005. Xing distinguishes five chronological stages: (i) the Buddha as a human teacher and guide, although always with superhuman attributes and powers; (ii)(a) the two-body theory of Sarvāstivāda (Vaibhāṣika), and (b) The Mahāsāṃghika supramundane (*lokottara*) approach to the Buddha (see Chapter 1 above); (iii) The early Mahāyāna view of the Buddha as truly the *dharmakāya*, the *tathatā* ('Thusness', 'Suchness'), the true nature of all things, and hence a cosmic principle; (iv) The identification of *dharmakāya* with, e.g., the *tathāgatagarbha*, '[o]ntologically . . . the ultimate reality and salvifically . . . the transcendent being who establishes sentient beings in enlightenment' (*ibid*.: 181); (v) The full three-body schema of, e.g., Yogācāra. Xing sees Mahāyāna approaches as owing a great deal to that of the Mahāsāṃghikas. On the superhuman qualities of the Buddha in early Buddhism, see *ibid*.: 13 ff.
3. *Atthasālinī* in Buddhaghosa 1920/1: 171–2; cf. *Pali–English Dictionary* 1921–5. We have the same in English, of course, when we refer to 'a great body of people'.
4. In the specific context of Buddhism, *kāya* also comes to mean a base or substratum (for various qualities). See the article by Makransky, 'Buddhahood and Buddha Bodies', in Buswell 2004.
5. Oozing and smelly, a common Indian observation with extensive cultural implications. This point was contested in the Mahāsāṃghika supramundane doctrine (Xing 2005: 20, 104–6).

6. For a list of the 32 major 'marks of a superman', and some of the 80 minor marks, see Thomas 1949: 220–1. See also Xing 2005: 24 ff. There is a tradition that they may be found in beings other than a Buddha, such as some *cakravartin* emperors.
7. The 10 powers are actually 10 types of knowledge, classed under wisdom. For a list of all 18 elements that make up the *dharmakāya* in Sarvāstivāda, see Xing 2005: 39–44, 200. On the distinction between ordinary compassion and the great compassion of the Buddha, see *ibid*.: 43. For variant lists, see Makransky 1997: 24 ff. Early Buddhist schools, and indeed subgroups within schools, were by no means agreed on what factors constitute the Buddha's *dharmakāya*.
8. See Dutt 1976: 150–3; Poussin 1928/48: vol. 3, 767–8. This discussion comes from the *Abhidharmakośa*, the great fifth-century CE (?) compendium of Sarvāstivāda and Sautrāntika doctrine. Note that Strong (2002: 108) cites a case where an enlightened layman is also said to possess a *dharmakāya* by virtue of his enlightenment. For a study of the Buddha in Sarvāstivāda, see also Makransky 1997: Ch. 2, and Xing 2005: Ch. 2.
9. Kajiyama 1985: 12 ff. Note, however, that as we saw in Chapter 1 above, there is some evidence that the physical relics of the Buddha deposited in stūpas were in practice seen as more than just dead inanimate bits of matter. The Buddha was himself present in the stūpa; the relics could re-embody the Buddha's actual physical presence. Hence John Strong (2002: 101 ff.) can talk about the emperor Aśoka enjoying 'a personal relationship' with the Buddha through his relics. He quotes (*ibid*.: 116) from Paul Mus, that the Buddha's relics, far from being seen as inanimate matter, are 'the Buddha on a magical plane'. Possibly the early Mahāyāna emphasis on the *dharmakāya* was a reaction against this trend. Perhaps, too, this reflects another dimension of the forest hermit's response to the village monastery and its stūpa.
10. Note that the use of the word *dhammakāya* in the Theravāda is a matter of dispute among scholars. It occurs only once in the Pali Canon (*Dīgha* iii 84), and appears to be glossed by Buddhaghosa to refer to the word of the Buddha contained in the Canon, that is, the teachings themselves (cf. Xing 2005: 71). This interpretation is opposed, however, by Lance Cousins (personal communication) who would argue that the Theravāda does not differ in this respect from the Sarvāstivāda (see also Makransky 1997: 26). However, this interpretation of the *dharmakāya* as the teachings is found here in the Mahāyāna, and it surely has a pre-Mahāyāna or non-Mahāyāna origin.
11. Verse 17, from the Sanskrit and Tibetan texts in Tucci 1932: 318. Cf. also a similar idea in *Vajracchedikā Sūtra* sect. 26b (pointed out to me by Paul Harrison).
12. Trans. according to the Tibetan. Sanskrit – 'made of the Dharma' (v. 22).
13. Verse 11, Tucci's translation. Cf. Tola and Dragonetti 1995: 132–3.
14. *Prapañcopaśamaḥ śivaḥ; Madhyamakahṛdaya* 3: 276 ff., in Gokhale 1962: 273.
15. See Gokhale and Bahulkar 1985: 81–2; cf. Poussin 1932–3: 136–7. See also the book-length study of Bhāvaviveka and the nature of the Buddha in Eckel 1992.

16. *Paramārthatattva; Bodhicaryāvatārapañjikā* (Prajñākaramati 1960: 168, 200).
17. Space prevents discussion of the interesting development of the *dharmakāya* in texts like the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*. Here the *dharmakāya*, as the cosmic body of the Cosmic Buddha, while an impersonal ultimate reality, is also said to manifest itself in various ways for the benefit of sentient beings, and to possess immeasurable light rays. For more details, see Xing 2005: 82–6. Cf. the identity of the *dharmakāya* with the *tathāgatagarbha* in sentient beings. In sūtra contexts like these we find already a suggestion that the *dharmakāya* is more than just the inert 'ultimate way of things'. The *dharmakāya* itself engages in salvific liberative activity, it has (as it were) 'salvific intentions' and power. This is a dimension of the *dharmakāya* developed, e.g., in the rNying ma tradition of Tibetan Buddhism.
18. That is, ultimate awareness (*anuttarajñāna*); comm. on *M.saṃg.* 7: 11, in Asaṅga 1938. Cf., however, the Tibetan sGam po pa's point that since it is beyond language so 'ultimate awareness' is only an expression of fools (sGam po pa 1970: 261).
19. Revolution of the basis = *āśrayaparāvṛtti*, or *āśrayaparivṛtti*: *M.saṃg.* 10: 3 and comms, in Asaṅga 1938.
20. *Dharmas*: *M.sūtrāl.* comm. on 9: 4, in Maitreyanātha 1970; cf. *M.saṃg.* and comm. 10: 3, in Asaṅga 1938.
21. *M.saṃg.* 10: 37 and comm, in Asaṅga 1938. This is interpreted by some traditions to mean that it remains forever but is constantly changing in response to the needs of sentient beings.
22. See Hsüan-tsang (Xuanzang) 1973: 793; Cook 1999: 360–1; cf. Nagao 1991: 108; Xing 2005: 134.
23. Perhaps as one's teacher. Great teachers can be thought of as a Buddha's Transformation Body, and Tibetans will sometimes speak of their lama as a Transformation Body Buddha. Xing (2005: 136–8) suggests that the origin of the *nirmāṇakāya* may lie in the early Buddhist idea of the *manomayakāya*, the 'mind-made body', by which a Buddha through his miraculous powers creates a similitude of himself for a particular purpose (such as visiting the heavenly realms in order to teach). In the Mahāyāna *nirmāṇakāya* all the appearances of the Buddha in this world (Jambudvīpa) are simply mind-made creations for a purpose, manifested by a Buddha dwelling in a Pure Land. Xing sees the strong influence of the Mahāsāṃghika supramundane (*lokottara*) approach to the Buddha in this development (the Buddha did not *really* hunger, feel tired etc., but did it all out of his skill-in-means, for a teaching purpose). Xing (2005: 139–40) also notes the importance of the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*, with its quicksilver world of the Buddha's magical salvific activity, for the development of the concept of the *nirmāṇakāya*.
24. From a Christian theological point of view, of course, this approach would have problems with the orthodox view that Christ genuinely and redemptively suffered and died on the cross.
25. For a detailed theologically- and philosophically-aware study of the bodies of the Buddha in Mahāyāna, particularly Yogācāra, see Griffiths 1994.

26. For a comprehensive study of the bodies of the Buddha in the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* and its Yogācāra-Svātantrika commentaries, and some of their Tibetan interpretations, see Makransky 1997.
27. On all of this, see Hopkins 1983: 119–21; cf. Dalai Lama 1985: 99–100.
28. In the *Akaniṣṭha* realm known as *Ghanavyūhakṣetra*. According to dGe lugs exegesis, it is necessary to practise the highest type of tantric techniques in order to become a fully-enlightened Buddha. For how this happened in the case of Śākyamuni see Cozort 1986: 108. Cf. also K. Gyatso 1982: 215–16.
29. Hopkins 1983: 121–2; Dalai Lama 1985: 101; mKhas grub rje 1968: 21–3.
30. Dalai Lama 1985: 102 ff.; Dhargyey 1976: 208; cf. Hopkins 1983: 122–3.
31. Of course, what is said concerning the Buddha here will apply to any one of the myriads of Buddhas in the Mahāyāna.
32. For a short dGe lugs description of the superior qualities of an Enjoyment Body Buddha, including the characteristic of their body (i.e. their manifestation as an Enjoyment Body) never ceasing, see K. Gyatso 1982: 222–3.
33. Poussin 1928/48: 3, 806–9. On Indian and Tibetan discussions of whether saṃsāra will or will not at some point in the future come to an end, with all sentient beings becoming Buddhas, and the problems entailed by either alternative, see Lopez, in Buswell and Gimello 1992: 170 ff.

Chapter 9 The path of the Bodhisattva

1. Kvaerne 1984: 256. Cf. Tucci 1980: 2. For an excellent introduction to Tibet and its cultural history, see now Kapstein 2006. The reign of Srong btsan sgam po is pp. 54–9. Dates of kings are taken from this book.
2. It is unlikely, however, that this touching tradition is true. Ye shes 'od appears to have died at home of illness, and his exact connection with Atiśa is unclear (see Kapstein 2006: 93).
3. It seems that Mar pa's first trip to India was in part to avoid the exorbitant fees charged for tantric instruction by the leading Tibetan tantric teacher of the day (Kapstein 2006: 103).
4. Rivalry between the Sa skya and other Tibetan schools was intense, and each was willing to call on Mongol military power in its support. In 1285 a bKa' brgyud subschool requested military aid against Sa skya from the Mongol ruler of Persia. In response, in 1287 a Mongol army was sent to Tibet by Khubilai Khan in support of Sa skya. This Mongol army completely destroyed the rival's home monastery (Kapstein 2006: 114).
5. An alternative explanation for the word *dalai* is simply that it translates the Tibetan 'gyatso' (*rgya mtsho*; ocean) of bSod nams rgya mtsho's name, which also forms part of the name of other Dalai Lamas from the Second to the current Fourteenth.
6. It should be noted, however, that contrary to what is often stated the Dalai Lamas are not, as such, heads of the dGe lugs tradition. This honour is held by whoever

is chief abbot of dGa' ldan monastery, the Holder of the Throne of Tsong kha pa. Tibetan religious history and politics after the time of the Fifth Dalai Lama was by no means tranquil, however, particularly during the time of his successor the Sixth Dalai Lama and its aftermath. For the rest of the story, see Kapstein 2006. For reflections on the disunited and often bloody history of Tibet in spite of its Buddhist adherence, in which many of the protagonists were Buddhist monks and masters, see *ibid*.: 138.

7. *Bhūmi* – Bodhisattva stage. Trans. in Houston 1980: 93 from the account by Bu ston (1290–1364).
8. Houston 1980: 93–5; Gómez 1983: 70–1. Note that in spite of this there is a very definite basis for monk Mahāyāna's view in earlier Indian Buddhism. See the *Ugraparipṛcchā Sūtra*, for example (Nattier 2003a: 305–6), or the commentary to the *Bailun* (**Śataśāstra*; Tucci 1929: 19). The latter work appears to be unknown as such in Indo-Tibetan Buddhism, but was very influential in China.
9. The actual historical truth of a great deal of this is problematic. There is an early Chinese source that has the monk Mahāyāna winning the debate. Both sides, of course, considered they were following the teachings of Nāgārjuna.
10. The *tathāgatagarbha* is an important theme in Chinese accounts of the debate.
11. From the third *Bhāvanākrama*, in Demiéville 1952: 349.
12. Text in Tucci 1958: 229; cf. trans. by Beyer 1974: 100.
13. See the translation, together with the commentary, in Atiśa 1983. For another translation of the verses, see Lopez 1995b: 294–301. On the limitations and potential of Atiśa's three classes (non-Buddhists would seem to be given a very low status), see Hopkins, in Buswell and Gimello 1992: 231 ff.
14. The centrality of generalized compassion (*karuṇā*) for all beings in Mahāyāna may have increased over the centuries. Nattier (2003a: 145–6) argues that it is not a central theme in the Bodhisattva path as described in the early *Ugraparipṛcchā Sūtra* (although *maitrī*, loving kindness, is recommended).
15. Verses 8–9; trans. from the Sanskrit by Crosby and Skilton (1995). Unless otherwise stated, quotations are from this translation. Cf. the detailed commentary in English by Geshe Kelsang Gyatso (1980: 8 ff.). For a detailed study of Śāntideva on the *bodhicitta*, see Brassard 2000. See also the article 'Bodhicitta (Thought of Awakening)' by Gómez, in Buswell 2004.
16. We are describing here the late systematized Indo-Tibetan Mahāyāna. It seems that in the relatively early *Ugraparipṛcchā Sūtra*, for example, the *bodhicitta* is a much vaguer concept, more 'a certain state of mind' in which a Bodhisattva acts (Nattier 2003a: 148). On *bodhicitta* in the *Bodhisattvapiṭaka* in comparison with other Indian Mahāyāna sources, see Pagel 1995: 124–33. Pagel points out (*ibid*.: 130) that many Mahāyāna sūtras, including the *Bodhisattvapiṭaka*, hold that the arising of the *bodhicitta* (*bodhicittotpāda*) is not simply a static thing that occurs just at the beginning of the Bodhisattva path. Rather it is continuously retaken and evolves through practice.

17. See Tsong kha pa's *Three Principal Aspects of the Path*, in Wangyal 1978: 127 ff., and Thurman 1982: 57–8.
18. There are now many books on these meditations. See, e.g., Rabten 1974; 1980; Dhargyey 1976: 98 ff.; S. Gyatso 1982; and also the eighth chapter of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*.
19. Of course, one could do this practice with any other relative, and it would be more appropriate if, for instance, one had a bad relationship with one's mother. Is the fact that it was developed by monks, often taken at an early age from their parents, in particular their mothers, of any significance?
20. *Bodhicaryāvatāra* 8: 94–6. Any answer to Śāntideva's question must be given in egoistic terms, and the ego is the cause of my suffering. Thus the development of *bodhicitta* requires and is a corollary of the teaching of not-Self and emptiness.
21. It is said that the Eighth Karma pa (1507–54) died of leprosy after clearing an area of the disease.
22. Atiśa 1983: 42 ff. Cf. Kamalaśīla, trans. in Beyer 1974: 103. For greater details, see Gyaltsen 1982: 26 ff.
23. On vows (and their absence) in the early *Ugraparipṛcchā Sūtra*, see Nattier 2003a: 147–51 (cf. Pagel 1995: 107). On the Bodhisattva vows in the *Mahāratnakūṭa* collection, see Pagel 1995: 106–7.
24. Trans. by Guenther from the quotation in sGam po pa 1970: 114.
25. Beyer 1974: 103; cf. Tsong kha pa, in Dargyay 1981: 97.
26. As the revision of this book was being completed, a scholarly study of the *bodhicitta* in Indo-Tibetan Buddhism appeared (Wangchuk 2007). Unfortunately, apart from noting its existence, it has not been possible to consider this substantial work here.
27. For different numbers of stages see, e.g., the article 'Bodhisattva(s)' by Kawamura, in Buswell 2004. All these Bodhisattva stages are quite unknown in the early *Ugraparipṛcchā Sūtra*. Indeed, the nearest one gets to anything like this in an early work like the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā* is the distinction between a Bodhisattva liable to 'fall back' from their Bodhisattva aspiration and one no longer liable to do so (Nattier 2003a: 151 ff., 171). The absence of any formal agreed scheme for the path of the Bodhisattva in some of the (plausibly) earliest Mahāyāna sūtras is also noted in Pagel 1995: 101, cf. 110–12, 241. These texts, he notes, mainly accentuate the ethical side of earlier [Mainstream] Buddhist practice. For some topics in the *Bodhisattvapiṭaka Sūtra* which were criticized by later writers and fell into oblivion, and an approach to the path structure that was subsequently rejected, see Pagel 1995: 323–4. The *Bodhisattvapiṭaka* too does not structure the path according to a 10-*bhūmi* model at all (for a summary of the *Bodhisattvapiṭaka*'s model, see *ibid*.: 324–5). Even in later systematic exegesis not all Mahāyāna traditions explain the path and its stages in the same way. It would thus be quite false to think that descriptions of the path to Buddhahood in Buddhist doctrinal sources represent simply descriptive accounts of the objective experiences of Buddhist practitioners, e.g., in their meditations. These are *doctrinal* – indeed scholastic – *constructs*: 'prescriptive systematizations of scriptural material', 'scholastic compendiums,

compiled by monks of formidable learning who were attempting to systematize and schematize the confused and often conflicting descriptions of practices and stages found scattered throughout the canon.' (Sharf 1995b; 2005b repr.: 261–2, 263). They are dependent, not on unmediated experiences as such, but rather on all the doctrinal, sociological and indeed no doubt economic and political factors that generate doctrinal categories and systematizations. For an influential (if controversial) critique of any 'personal private experiential' account of these stages of the path, see Sharf 1995b (2005b repr.). Buddhism is *not*, Sharf wants to say, 'all about meditative experiences'. Cf. also Buswell and Gimello 1992: 11, and Sharf's comments, especially on the paper in the same volume in which Gimello suggests that Buddhist path-structures serve as *guides* to meditative experience and hence are taken to *confirm* Buddhist tenets. For Sharf, in reality systematic doctrinal 'Buddhist *mārga* [path] texts . . . functioned more as sacred talismans than as practical guides. . . . [They] were venerated as invaluable spiritual treasures to be copied, memorized, chanted, and otherwise revered' (1995b; 2005b repr.: 265). Sharf argues that meditation is actually quite rare in Buddhist monastic life (a point that, as we have seen, early Mahāyānists also seem to have noted and lamented, although how many early Mahāyānists there actually were is a moot point). For general support of Sharf's position from Tibetan monastic education and practice, see Dreyfus 1997a (2005b repr., esp. 46–9). For Dreyfus the texts on stages of the path are not to do with experiences as such, but 'the construction of the kind of meaningful universe that Buddhist practice requires. . . . They provide students with a meaningful outlook, which may support further practices, but which has no direct relevance to them' (*ibid.*: 50, 53). Moreover, study of the texts on the stages of the path is in itself meritorious and hence coheres with real-life Buddhist practice that mainly involves merit-making (frequently from giving – the first of the perfections) rather than practising meditation (*ibid.*: 50).

28. Since for late Indian and Tibetan schemes like that of the *Bhāvanākramas* the Bodhisattva after the arising of *bodhicitta* is still far from the first Bodhisattva stage (*bhūmi*), the attaining of the Bodhisattva path defined in terms of the 10 *bhūmis* becomes very much more difficult, advanced and marvellous as time passes. A Bodhisattva on even the first Bodhisattva stage becomes more and more of an ideal type (or a category into which can be placed certain great teachers of the past), rather than a person who has completed an actual attainment as a hard-working Buddhist practitioner. Cf., on the other hand, ninth-century Japanese Tendai arguments for Buddhahood in one lifetime, 'with this very body', hence shortening the path considerably (see Groner's contribution to Buswell and Gimello 1992: 439 ff.). Here, in Tendai, attaining Buddhahood is said actually to be *easy*. A similar idea, that Buddhahood can be attained in one lifetime, becomes a theme in some forms of late Indian (and hence Tibetan) tantric Buddhism.
29. For translating *kṣānti* as 'endurance' rather than the standard 'patience', see Nattier 2003a: 244, n. 240.

30. For a handy survey of the stages of the path in Mainstream Buddhism, see Gethin 1998: Ch. 7.
31. One should not assume, however, that this combination originated with Atiśa and Kamalaśīla. Pagel (1995) argues for what appears to be an early stage of the use of (at least parts of) the five-path model in Ch. 11 of the *Bodhisattvapiṭaka*, applied specifically to the Bodhisattva's development of the perfection of wisdom.
32. See Dhargyey 1976: 188–93; cf. Gyatso 1968: 83; Dalai Lama 1985: 91.
33. Except, one assumes, out of compassion. In relatively late sūtras like the *Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra* certain very advanced Bodhisattvas such as Avalokiteśvara are said, for example, to visit the hells in order to help suffering hell beings. But that is not (an uncontrolled) rebirth. That an advanced Bodhisattva may find himself in hell for any reason is (implicitly) denied in a relatively early sūtra like the *Bodhisattvapiṭaka* (Pagel 1995: 326).
34. Dhargyey 1976: 193–5; cf. Gyatso 1968: 83–4; Dalai Lama 1985: 91. Cf. sGam po pa 1970: 233.
35. This is particularly the case in the *Daśabhūmika Sūtra*. This sūtra is now part of the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*, which, as we have seen, expands the achievements of Bodhisattvas and Buddhas to immense magnitudes.
36. Dayal 1932: 106 ff. On the four *brahmavihāras* in Mahāyāna sources, see Pagel 1995: 133–45. Cf. other sūtra sources discussed in Pagel 1995: 219 ff., where (logically enough) the *abhijñās* are attained later at the fifth Bodhisattva stage, with the perfection of meditation.
37. Pagel 1995: 80 ff. For a detailed study of these 37 factors in Mainstream Buddhism, see Gethin 2001.
38. Dayal 1932: 66. Cf. the translation of the *Daśabhūmika Sūtra* from the Sanskrit by Honda 1968: 130 ff., and the translation from the Chinese by Cleary in his *Avataṃsaka* translation (1984–7, vol. 2: 161 ff.). Note that this follows the *Daśabhūmika Sūtra*, which reflects an earlier model than the systematic one found in, e.g., Atiśa and Kamalaśīla, for whom it would make no sense to speak of a Bodhisattva at the first *bhūmi* vowing to enter the Mahāyāna. He or she would have been following the Mahāyāna for a very long time already.
39. On giving as the real basis of the whole path, see Buswell, in Buswell and Gimello 1992: 123–6. On the early history of giving in Mahāyāna sūtra literature (the *Ugraparipṛcchā Sūtra*, where it particularly applies to lay Bodhisattvas), see Nattier 2003a: 111 ff., 166. On giving in the *Bodhisattvapiṭaka*, with comparative reference to a number of other Mahāyāna sūtras, see Pagel 1995: 145–60. Note (*ibid.*: 149) the centrality of impartiality in the Bodhisattva's giving. Cf. also nonattachment as 'the object (*artha*) of all practice' (*ibid.*: 239).
40. Even so, the *Daśabhūmika Sūtra* does not discuss the perfections at any length. In other sūtras too they are often mentioned only in passing. The sūtra that does discuss the perfections at length is the *Bodhisattvapiṭaka* (see Pagel 1995: 105 and n. 24, 120, Ch. 4), leading Pagel to argue that this was the reason for its inclusion in the *Mahāratnakūṭa* collection.

41. See Dayal 1932: 172 ff., and sGam po pa 1970: 156. The importance of an awareness of emptiness in the perfection of giving (and the other perfections) is particularly stressed in the *Akṣayamatinirdeśa Sūtra* (Pagel 1995: 156, 166; Braarvig 1993).
42. The *Bodhisattvapiṭaka* specifically associates the perfection of giving with a jātaka-type story of the Buddha's previous lives (Pagel 1995: 154). For one of the best-known tales, see the story of the Bodhisattva giving his body to a starving tigress, in the *Suvarṇabhāsottama Sūtra* 1970: 85–97. For the giving of wife and children, see the Pali version in the *Vessantara Jātaka*, Cone and Gombrich 1977.
43. Schopen 1997: Ch. 2. Note, however, that Nattier's study of the relatively early Mahāyāna *Ugraparipṛcchā Sūtra* suggests that the earliest phase of transference of merit in Mahāyāna was in order that *one's own* merit would not produce its natural karmic results (e.g. a better rebirth) but rather would be transferred to *one's own* attainment of Buddhahood (Nattier 2003a: 114–15, 216–17 and n. 55).
44. But note that without direct nonconceptual insight into emptiness the Bodhisattva could not attain even the first *bhūmi*, let alone the second. For the perfection of morality in the *Bodhisattvapiṭaka* in a comparative context, and the importance of an awareness of emptiness in Mahāyāna morality, see Pagel 1995: 160–82.
45. Note that there is a view, however, that a Bodhisattva after the first *bhūmi* no longer feels pain as such. For the perfection of patience (endurance) in the *Bodhisattvapiṭaka* etc., see Pagel 1995: 182–201. The highest form of endurance is to understand properly emptiness, and it culminates in the *anutpattikadharmakṣānti*, the patienct endurance that comes when seeing that '[e]verything is unborn, unproduced and unarisen' (*ibid.*: 195).
46. For the perfection of effort in the *Bodhisattvapiṭaka* etc., see Pagel 1995: 201–16. In this sūtra, on the other hand, the 37 elements of enlightenment are acquired as part of attaining the perfection of wisdom (the sixth and final perfection). See *ibid.*: 285 ff.
47. See the *Daśabhūmika Sūtra*, trans. in Honda 1968: 175 and Cleary 1984–7, vol. 2: 48.
48. Cf. sGam po pa: it is detachment of the senses from agitation and the mind from artificial categorization. For the perfection of meditation in the *Bodhisattvapiṭaka*, see Pagel 1995: 216–40.
49. Honda 1968: 179–80; Cleary 1984–7, vol. 2: 51. A number of these were forbidden to monks under the Vinaya, at least as professions. This may be an example where the rules could be flexible in the light of compassion.
50. The perfection of wisdom is the last of the major perfections discussed in the *Bodhisattvapiṭaka*, which is, as we have seen, an important sūtra source for the perfections.
51. For Tibetan discussions of how the understanding of emptiness at the sixth stage differs from that at the first, and why the difference is important, see Klein, in Buswell and Gimello 1992: 277 ff. For the very long chapter on wisdom in the *Bodhisattvapiṭaka*, see Pagel 1995: 240–316, and the translation in his Ch. 5.
52. It is a view held in China by Fazang, for example. See Cook 1977: 110.

53. See the *Daśabhūmika Sūtra*, trans. in Honda 1968: 206. Cleary's Chinese seems to be different (1984–7, vol. 2: 70).
54. But cf. the *Bodhisattvapiṭaka*, where this is attained in connection with and in the light of mastering the sixth perfection, that of the perfection of wisdom. See the discussion in Pagel 1995: 272 ff.
55. This is a point that is particularly taken up and developed in Japan in the thirteenth century by Shinran, with his Pure Land Buddhism and its reliance not on oneself (one's 'Own Power') but on 'Other Power'. See Chapter 10 below.

Chapter 10 Trust, self-abandonment and devotion: the cults of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas

1. Trans. by Saddhatissa 1985: vv. 1133, 1136. Cf. the translation by Norman (*Sutta Nipāta* 1984).
2. *Visuddhimagga* 7: 2, in Buddhaghosa 1975, quoting from the standard formula found in the Pali Canon. Harrison 1992a: 228–31 argues that *anusmṛti* is better understood as 'commemoration' than simply 'recollection'.
3. Buddhaghosa 1975: 230. Cf. Harrison 1992a: 218.
4. Note the expression 'a happy destiny', and also 'the plane of the Buddhas'. What, or where, *is* the plane of the Buddhas? As we shall see, the most famous of the 'Pure Lands' where in Mahāyāna a Buddha even now dwells teaching the Dharma is called *Sukhāvatī*, literally 'the Happy Place'. It is there that one can still live in the presence of the Buddha, free from fear.
5. See also Gethin 2006 for what Gethin argues is meditative visualization, including of 'alternative realms', in Mainstream Buddhist sources, and some discussion (based on Harrison 2003) of their link with the *Sukhāvatīvyūha Sūtras* and Pure Land visualization. The connection of *buddhānusmṛti* practices with visualizing the next Buddha, Maitreya, as he is now in the Tuṣita heaven, with the meditator in his presence – a practice theoretically acceptable in a Mainstream Buddhist context and arguably quite ancient – is noted by Sponberg (Sponberg and Hardacre 1988: 101). Visualization in the history of Buddhist meditation has perhaps been much more important than was realized. On the way in which *anusmṛti* practices were used to produce an alteration in consciousness, see Harrison 1992a: 217–19. For illustrations of a set of astonishing Tibetan tantric paintings from the walls of the Dalai Lamas' 'secret temple' (the *kLu khang*; pronounced 'Lukhang') in Lhasa relating to visions and visionary techniques, see Baker and Laird 2000. Harrison notes in particular the way in which such practices are specifically recommended as a remedy against fear, especially fear felt when meditating in wild or out of the way places. One should recall the relevance of this to the forest hermit context of the rise of Mahāyāna, and also the association of the rise of Mahāyāna in part with visionary experiences. The fact that forest hermit monks, meditating in wild jungly places, were often alone and frightened is a point that is not

always appreciated in the modern world. Possibly in the frightening (and perhaps lonely) conditions of the life of a forest hermit *buddhānusmṛti* practice became particularly popular. It led sometimes to visions, and visions led (at least in part) to the world of the new Mahāyāna sūtras. Cf. a Chinese hagiographical account of someone very frightened – in prison and about to be executed – having a dream or trance that led to a salvific new Mahāyāna sūtra, in Campany 1993: 249–50. Clearly, the possibility of this happening was well accepted in Mahāyāna circles. Another dimension of this has been suggested to me by Michael Carrithers, arising out of his work on modern forest hermit monks in Sri Lanka. He observed cases of a very close relationship of love and care for the many animals and other creatures that surround the hermit monks. The understanding that animals – including the frightening animals that threaten the meditator – are themselves frightened and hungry, just like the meditators themselves, is used to generate love and compassion for the animals themselves that, on the model of Śākyamuni Buddha himself when attacked by a maddened elephant, seeks to calm the animals and eliminate threat and fear for both animal and monk. This allows the suggestion that the emphasis in Mahāyāna of concern for the welfare of 'all sentient beings' was connected among forest hermit monks particularly with a concern for the frightening creatures that surrounded them in the wild places which they sought out for their Buddhist practice. On relating to and coping with wild animals that surround forest hermitages, see Carrithers 1983: 85, 197–8, 291–3.

6. Trans. in Chang 1983: 110. From the Chinese. Cf. the translation by Conze 1973b: 101.
7. Demiéville 1954: 360 ff.; Teiser 1988b: 444–5. Teiser also shows how the Chinese used pictures as meditation devices to facilitate visualization (in this case, of the hells in order to break attachment to saṃsāra). On visualization sūtras and Kashmir or neighbouring Central Asia, with particular reference to the **Amitāyurbuddhānusmṛti Sūtra* (see below), see also Soper 1959: 144–6.
8. The actual expression 'Pure Land' translates the Chinese *jingtu* (*ching-t'u*; Japanese: *jōdo*), and as such appears to have been coined in China.
9. Notice the Buddhas are plural; Amitāyus is given here only as an example. Trans. in Harrison 1990: 68. See also Harrison 1978.
10. Zürcher 1972: 220; cf. text of Huiyuan's biography (*ibid.*: 244–5), and Tsukamoto 1985: 844 ff.
11. Zürcher 1972: 220. It was later considered that the monk Huiyuan had thus created the first 'White Lotus Society' (cf. Mochizuki 2001: 256–63). This was seen, rather anachronistically, as the prototype of later lay sectarian religious societies either of that name or to which it was attributed by others. In their occasional tendency to millenarianism (often associated with the coming of Maitreya, the next Buddha), social radicalism and reputation for magic the 'White Lotus societies' periodically troubled the Chinese central government and were involved in, e.g., the White Lotus Rebellion (1796–1804). On the White Lotus societies and their activities, see Overmyer 1976, Sponberg and Hardacre 1988: Ch. 5 (Overmyer) and ter Haar 1999.

12. See the *Dazhidulun* in Lamotte 1980a: 2272–4; Lamotte's notes (*ibid.*: vii, 2263 ff.); Tsukamoto 1985: 851–4; Zürcher 1972: 226 ff. Is it significant that in the *Akṣobhyavyūha Sūtra*, as Nattier (2000: 84; 'inter-galactic travel') points out, only the Bodhisattvas travel to other Buddha-lands to see Buddhas, and not Hearers? For intensive practice of the *pratyutpanna samādhi* in eighth-century Tiantai, leading to striking visions, see Stevenson in Lopez 1996: 206–7 (note the visionary's fears that others would not accept the veracity of his visions, and the way in which his fears were calmed by further visions). Because of lack of reliable hagiographic information it is very difficult to know about actual cases of visionary experience in early and middle-period Mahāyāna Buddhism in India. The situation is quite different in China and further East Asia where material is abundant. For some Chinese and Japanese cases of Pure Land visions and vivid dreams see, e.g., Becker 1984. There can be no doubt at all that through *buddhānusmṛti*-type practices Pure Land practitioners considered themselves and were considered by others to have visions and dreams of alternative realms and personages – gods, as well as Buddhas and Bodhisattvas – that gave them assurance (freedom from fear), directions and sometimes new teachings. Several distinguished Japanese Pure Land practitioners, included Hōnen, kept detailed private accounts of their dreams (Becker 1984: 141–2). On dreams and visions in Japanese Buddhism, particularly the dreams of Hōnen's opponent Myōe Shōnin, see Tanabe 1992. 'Throughout his life', Tanabe writes, 'Myōe lived in the pursuit of visions. . . . The unfolding of his life . . . is presented in the context of historical events taking place around him, scriptural traditions preserving past visions, doctrinal systems interpreting those visions, arguments defending the primacy of visions, and, of course, ritual attempts to produce visions' (*ibid.*: 12). And Myōe considered his dreams to be 'windows to another world, not mirrors of his [own] psyche' (*ibid.*: 16). This matches the evidence in Chapter 1 above for visionary and dream influences on early Mahāyāna forest hermits in India. For the importance of dreams in the spiritual life of a modern Tibetan yogin, see Tenzin (no date). Becker also discusses the (apparently quite common) deathbed visions by Pure Land practitioners (which he relates to near-death experiences). In East Asia accounts of deathbed visions form a distinct genre of Buddhist writing. Although evidence is lacking, given their apparent universality it is perhaps reasonable to assume that in India too, including among forest hermits, deathbed visions (or near-death experiences) may have been experienced that suggested alternative realms (initially, perhaps, the realms of the gods) and eventually actual Buddhas still present helping and teaching their followers, and at death leading their followers not to inferior saṃsāric heavens but to their very own Pure Lands. One sixteenth-century Chinese writer deduced the (relative, mind-dependent) intersubjective objectivity rather than hallucinatory nature of the Pure Lands from the apparent universality of meditative visions and deathbed reports (Becker 1984: 147). For some translated examples of Chinese Pure Land visions and deathbed accounts (including that of a parrot who, it's said, attained birth

in the Pure Land, and left behind relics), see Stevenson, in Lopez 1995b: Ch. 48. For looking-out for deathbed visions, and making notes of them, see *ibid*.: 378.

13. Tsukamoto 1985: 2, 845–6. Jones 2001: 238, n. 7 points out that visiting deities in visions in order to receive teachings from them was also part of Daoist practice at this time.
14. In 821 Han Yu's emperor Xianzong, for example.
15. For a good introduction to Mainstream Buddhist cosmology, see Gethin 1998: Ch. 5. For some diagrams, see also Gómez 1996: 257–60.
16. See Rowell, 1935: esp. 379–81; 1937. For a more recent study, see Fujita 1996a. Paul Harrison has drawn my attention to the very plausible suggestion in Davidson 2002: 132–3 that *kṣetra*, 'field' may have some connection here with the Indian political notion of a royal 'domain'. If so, then *buddhakṣetra* would be better translated as 'Buddha Domain'.
17. Purity, incidentally, was and is an important cultural notion in India, pervading (Brāhmanic) Indian society and underlying, for example, caste divisions. The more pure a person is the higher their religious status. Derivatively, the more pure their environment is the more they preserve their high religious status.
18. *Saṃdhinirmocana Sūtra*, in Lamotte 1962: 397. Note, however, that in the early model of Akṣobhya's Pure Land of Abhirati there are also found non-Mahāyāna practitioners. Indeed, in various ways the early model of Abhirati does not always fit with the developed Mahāyāna view of a Pure Land.
19. See Ducor 2004: 380–1. On the similarities and dissimilarities of Sukhāvatī with a heaven, in the light of Japanese understandings of Amitābha's Pure Land as a 'world of another dimension', in fact i.e. enlightenment itself, see Fujita 1996a: 44–8, cf. Fujita 1996b: 26.
20. On these 'fruits of the Path' in Mainstream Buddhism, see Gethin 1998: 194.
21. Perhaps I should also mention here another model of the Pure Land related to this found in, e.g., Nichiren traditions, and popular among modern Buddhist social activists. As we saw at the end of the chapter on the *Lotus Sūtra*, there is the suggestion that at some point in the future, when enough people are practising the true Dharma (or when, through Buddhist-inspired action social and political conditions are right) *at that time* this very world will then be the Pure Land. The Pure Land here is not the pure mind as such, nor is it the world as seen by a pure mind. Rather, it is the properly ordered society that results from the activities of those with pure minds (i.e. right-thinking Buddhists). This view of the Pure Land also has links with East Asian Buddhist millenarianism (see, e.g., Overmyer 1976: 157).
22. Harrison 2000 argues that in much of earlier Indian Mahāyāna, Maitreya is the only Bodhisattva with something resembling a 'celestial' status at all. Figures like Mañjuśrī are rather more inspirational exemplary Bodhisattvas than celestial beings, 'saviours', as such.
23. The origins of the Metteyya cult in Theravāda can be traced to the *Cakkavattisīhanāda Sutta* (*Dīgha* 3: 26; cf. Jaini, in Sponberg and Hardacre 1988: Ch. 3). It is worth

noting, however, that according to Jan Nattier 'only a minority of Maitreya texts exhibit any essential Mahāyāna elements', although some works represent Mahāyāna versions of the Maitreya tradition. Nattier considers that the mythology of Maitreya was clearly elaborated outside a Mahāyāna context, and some Mahāyāna texts try to play down the significance of Maitreya. The two most important Central Asian texts on Maitreya explicitly claim Vaibhāṣika (Sarvāstivāda) sectarian affiliation, which might also offer a link with Yogācāra. There is hence nothing particularly 'Mahāyāna' as such about the figure and cult of Maitreya (Nattier, in Sponberg and Hardacre 1988: 33–4, 46; but cf. Jaini in the same volume for a suggested Mahāsāṃghika link with the elaboration of the Maitreya cult). The same view of the essentially Mainstream Buddhist origins and nature of the Maitreya cult was also held by the Korean Wŏnhyo (*ibid.*: 99). Maitreya is the subject of a long chapter towards the end of the *Gaṇḍavyūha Sūtra* (Cleary 1984–7, vol. 3: 328–78).

24. See Soper 1959: 213 ff. for a summary of the sources preserved in Chinese.
25. Zürcher, in Bechert and Gombrich 1984: 202. On Maitreyan millenarianism and apocalyptic movements, see also, e.g., Overmyer 1976: esp. 80–6, 98–101, 150–61, ter Haar 1999 (157 for prophecies and books alleged to have been received from the Buddha in dreams; 168–9 for a 'Master Xu', fl. fifteenth century, who was possibly a messianic Maitreyan and had sex with local women in connection with visions he had in order to 'transmit the seed of the Buddha'; 250–2 on Maitreyan elements in the 1796–1804 uprising), Sponberg and Hardacre 1988: 31–2, Ch. 5, and Sen 2003: 86–94. It should be noted that Maitreya myth could also be used in a pro-establishment way too, as in the suggestion that the emperor might really be Maitreya, or through his virtuous rule he might be hastening the coming of Maitreya. Cf. *ibid.*: 208–10 on the identification of the Japanese prince Shōtoku Taishi with Maitreya; in Central Asia several kings were identified with Maitreya, while in China Empress Wu proclaimed that she was an incarnation of Maitreya (Sen 2003: 91–2, 94–101; Overmyer 1976: 226). On the importance of Maitreya in Korea, particularly in modern messianic new religions, see Lancaster, in Sponberg and Hardacre 1988: Ch. 6, esp. 146–9. See also *ibid.*: Ch. 7, on the important role of Maitreya in two twentieth-century millenarian movements in Vietnam (cf. *ibid.*: 187–9 and Ch. 12 on the place of Maitreya in modern Japanese new religions).
26. See Hori 1962 (with a photograph; for an online piece with a picture, and also details of the process of self-mummification, see http://www.geocities.com/gabigreve2000/mummiesinjapan.html (accessed 14 Jul. 2007)). The other dimension of self-mummification lies in the tantric idea of 'becoming a Buddha in this very body', which is taken here as entailing that the body itself should not perish if the meditator attains enlightenment. Its mummified status indicates that the monk has become an enlightened Buddha. The self-mummified monks are hence treated as Buddhas and worshipped by groups of devotees. On Chinese discussions of how to keep the body intact in order to await the coming of Maitreya, and their Japanese successors, see Brock,

in Sponberg and Hardacre 1988: 237. On mummification in general in Chinese Buddhism, see Sharf 1992. See also the note below on Mahākāśyapa.

27. But, according to the *Sūtra of Meditation on Maitreya Bodhisattva's Rebirth on High in the Tuṣita Heaven* (a Maitreya visualization sūtra from Turfan in Central Asia translated into Chinese in 455 CE) it is in no way inferior to a Pure Land. Rebirth there in the presence of Maitreya is just as desirable (Soper 1959: 215–16). Here, perhaps, we see competition with the apparently more attractive Pure Land cult of Amitāyus/Amitābha. On the early rivalry in China with the Amitāyus cult, a rivalry which Maitreya largely lost, see Demiéville 1954: 389 ff. (cf. Sponberg and Hardacre 1988: 102; cf. also Yogācāra (Hossō) advocacy of Maitreya (Miroku) in twefith-century Japan against the Amitābha exclusivism of Hōnen, on the basis that Tuṣita, being nearer, must be easier to get to than a Pure Land like Sukhāvatī, in Ford 2001: 207–9 and Tanabe 1992: 41). In a source translated by Whalen Lai (in Foard *et al.* 1996: 183) a 'Dharma Master' at death is invited by heavenly beings to Tuṣita to be with Maitreya but he refuses to go. He wants to go only to Sukhāvatī and Amitābha. And so those attending his deathbed call on Amitābha who duly responds.
28. On Maitreya visualization in a Yogācāra context (from the account of Wŏnhyo), see Sponberg in Sponberg and Hardacre 1988: Ch. 4. Sponberg suggests (*ibid.*: 107) that in the earlier period (*c.* seventh century and before) different Buddha and Bodhisattva cult practices may have been adopted depending on particular purpose (Maitreya for exegetical inspiration, Avalokiteśvara when going on a journey and so on) and this contrasts with the more exclusive affiliation to, e.g., Amitāyus that was to develop in East Asian Buddhism. If so, this earlier pattern would correspond more closely to that of, e.g., Nepal and Tibet.
29. For Chinese sources on colossal Maitreya statues in north-west India/Afghanistan, see Soper 1959: 268–70. Note also the account of a Sri Lankan king who, without any particular meditative cultivation on his part, is said to have received a vision of Tuṣita on his deathbed (Demiéville 1954: 383; see also Nattier, in Sponberg and Hardacre 1988: 40).
30. For further stories of Maitreya visions, in which Kashmir regularly plays a significant role, see Soper 1959: 218.
31. Basham 1981: 43; cf. Soper 1959: 212 ff., and Nattier, in Sponberg and Hardacre 1988: 34–5, 46–7.
32. For early artistic representations of Maitreya, see Soper 1959: 216–19. Soper suggests that this represents the posture of a Persian king at the time of the earliest Maitreyan use of the motif in Afghanistan. Other more recent scholars connect this sitting posture with the style of portrayal of Kuṣāṇa royalty. Maitreya, or a Buddha, portrayed this way may hence double up as a representation of the local emperor and his protecting (or indeed threatening) power (see Cohen 1998: 397).
33. For illustrations, see Gaulier *et al.* 1976: picture 46; cf. pictures 55–7, 58 (all wall paintings), and the embroidery from ninth/tenth centuries. See also Soper 1959: 219.

34. For discussion of a Japanese example, see Brock, in Sponberg and Hardacre 1988: Ch. 10. This apparently portrays Maitreya receiving the robe of Śākyamuni from Mahākāśyapa, and thus represents the handing-over, the transmission, of the True Dharma from Śākyamuni Buddha – the Buddha of the Present – to his Future Buddha successor (*ibid.*: 222 ff.). Possibly other gigantic statues of Maitreya were also intended to remind passers-by of the same theme. In the *Ekottarāgama* of Mainstream Buddhism the Buddha is supposed to have asked four of his disciples to remain in the world until the coming of Maitreya (Xing 2005: 169). According to sūtra sources well known in China, the Buddha's successor Mahākāśyapa remains in meditation inside a cave from the time of Śākyamuni until the advent of Maitreya Buddha precisely for this purpose of Dharma transmission (Soper 1959: 214). There is no doubt here a model for the story of Kūkai mentioned above and hence also the self-mummifiers.
35. See Suzuki 1935: 328 ff.; Ch'en 1964: 405–8.
36. See van Oort 1986: I, plates 5ab, 6, 15, and 18.
37. For an illustration, see Zwalf 1985: 216.
38. He is well known not just in cultural contexts that nowadays we would think of as specifically 'Mahāyāna'. Avalokiteśvara (as Guanyin) is a popular figure of devotion in contemporary Thailand, perhaps due to increasing Chinese influence. Because of the presence of Mahāyāna in the past, historically Avalokiteśvara (with the closely linked Tārā) has been an important figure too in Sri Lankan Buddhism (see Holt 1991, Mori 1997, 1999), and also in the Buddhism of eighth- to thirteenth-century Cambodia, as well as Indonesia. It seems that the earliest artistic representations of Avalokiteśvara may have been in Gandhāran Indian art of the second/third centuries CE, simply as an attendant of the Buddha.
39. Schopen 2005: Ch. 8. On the use of the word 'cult' here, see Campany 1993: 262 ff.
40. There is reason to think that these dimensions of Avalokiteśvara were particularly appealing to merchants, who often faced many of these dangers. Sculptures depicting Avalokiteśvara as saviour from such dangers were often placed on trade routes (Lewis 2000: 52). Merchants were significant supporters of Buddhism. For the enthusiasm of Newar merchants in Nepal for Avalokiteśvara, who is particularly important in Nepalese Buddhism, see, e.g., Lewis 2000: Ch. 3. Locke 1980 is a comprehensive study of the Avalokiteśvara cult in the Kathmandu valley. On the importance of *calling to mind* Avalokiteśvara in these early Mahāyāna sources as a means of obtaining the benefits, and its possible connections with *buddhānusmṛti*, see Harrison 1992a: 224–5.
41. A claim also made in Japan for prince Shōtoku Taishi. For some critical consideration of the exact relationship Tibetans consider the Dalai Lama to have with Avalokiteśvara, see Williams 2004: 18–20.
42. For this reason, perhaps, in the *Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra* he appears to be lauded as higher than the Buddha himself.
43. All of this is, of course, perfectly understandable in terms of the development of Mahāyāna Buddhism. As a doctrinal development in Buddhism it does not require in *itself*

reference to external influences. See also, in the Amitābha context, Nattier 2003b: 193.

44. For example: Bechert and Gombrich 1984: 210; Zwalf 1985: 234; van Oort 1986: II, plate 34b. For some early Chinese tales of the salvific activities of Avalokiteśvara, see Lopez 1996: Ch. 5. See also Campany 1993 for a detailed study of the *presence* of Guanyin in Chinese hagiographies and miracle stories, and Kieschnick 1997: 103–5. Some Japanese tales can be found in Tanabe 1999: Ch. 10. For some modern tales, see Blofeld 1977. As Kieschnick points out (1997: 108–9), one of the purposes of such miraculous tales is to convince potential local patrons of the superior power of Buddhist deities to alternative local deities, or the superiority of one particular monastery to another monastery. Another purpose, as Huijiao (Hui-chiao) says in a treatise, is the spreading of Buddhism (*ibid*.: 68). Cf. though the Chinese tale of the emperor who sought to test the spiritual powers of the monk Falin (Fa-lin). If Avalokiteśvara (Guanyin) did not save Falin after seven days, the monk would be executed. The sensible Falin replied that in such a case it would make more sense to pray to the emperor than to Avalokiteśvara (*ibid*.: 101).
45. Early Chinese translations of the *Sukhāvatīvyūha Sūtra* have Avalokiteśvara succeeding Amitābha as the Buddha of Sukhāvatī (Nattier, 'Buddha(s)', in Buswell 2004). He thus plays the same role in relation to Amitābha as does Maitreya to Śākyamuni.
46. See the translation in Thomas 1952: 73. See also Thomas 1951: 190; Mallmann 1948: 39–40. Studholme 2002: 121–54 gives a complete summary of the sūtra. For a Newar Nepalese popular retelling in the vernacular of stories related to those in the *Kāraṇḍavyūha*, and Newar devotional rituals centred on Avalokiteśvara, see Lewis 2000: 54 ff. (see also the same source in Lopez 1995b: Ch. 11). For more on the worship of Avalokiteśvara in the Kathmandu valley, see the article by Lewis, in Payne and Tanaka 2004: 242 ff.
47. See Mallmann 1948: 111 ff.; she also speaks (controversially) of possible Iranian influences. See also Gellner 1992: 95.
48. Zwalf 1985: 80, 103; cf. Läänemets 2006: 308–10 (drawing on a work by Hikosaka Shu on Buddhism in Tamilnadu) on how the association of Avalokiteśvara with Śiva may have come about.
49. Which, incidentally, assuming it is in correct grammatical form, cannot possibly mean 'Oh, the jewel in the lotus, *hūṃ*' as it is frequently translated. See Thomas 1951: 187–8. If it is not in correct grammatical form, then it could mean almost anything. For a study of the early history in India of this mantra and its relationship with the figure of Avalokiteśvara, see Studholme 2002. The history of attempts to try and understand what the mantra means has been entertainingly treated in Lopez 1998: Ch. 4.
50. Potalaka was hence thought to be a holy place one could visit with one's physical body. Yet as Avalokiteśvara's abode it is also itself related to a Pure Land. This had some religious significance, particularly in Japan. For a study of those Japanese monks and ascetics who set off from Japan in boats that were frequently not seaworthy in order

to find Potalaka, or swimming sometimes with stones attached to them, hence effectively ensuring their deaths, see Moerman 2007. Potalaka as the mountain home of Avalokiteśvara is found in the *Gaṇḍavyūha Sūtra*, and perhaps originated there. For a study of Avalokiteśvara in this sūtra, an important, relatively early Indian Mahāyāna source for his cult (possibly the earliest, although the Avalokiteśvara section is one of the later parts of the sūtra), see Läänamets 2006. On Potalaka and its possible location in south India, see *ibid*.: 304–11. For a translation, see Cleary 1984–7, vol. 3: 151–6. Avalokiteśvara is not a particularly important Bodhisattva in the *Gaṇḍavyūha* (he is much less important there than Maitreya, Mañjuśrī and of course Samantabhadra), but already he is especially associated with compassion, so perhaps this particular association also originated there. Given the centrality of compassion in the Mahāyāna, that might explain in part his subsequent rise to pre-eminence. Note also the association here of Avalokiteśvara with overcoming various different types of fears through a method of recollection (*anusmṛti*; Läänamets 2006: 320 ff.). Putting things together speculatively, one could suggest that perhaps this hints at the possibility of visionary experiences through some form of *anusmṛti* or dreams by Buddhist forest hermits, dwelling on a mountain in southern India associated with a local deity who was identified at some point by non-Buddhists with the pan-Indian Brāhmanical deity Śiva. Buddhists initially identified this god with an attendant of the Buddha, but eventually as a Bodhisattva (as indeed in jātaka-type tales Śākyamuni as a Bodhisattva was often reborn as a god, and Maitreya is currently in the Tuṣita god-realm). Studholme 2002: Ch. 4 also discusses in some detail the Śaivite associations of Avalokiteśvara, and argues that the mantra *oṃ maṇipadme hūm* evolved in a Śaivite context in competition with the Śaivite mantra *namaḥ śivāya*.

51. For a Putuo example, see Zwalf 1985: 231; cf. Jan 1981: 142. On Putuo Shan and its pilgrimages, see Chün-fang Yü, in Naquin and Yü 1992: Ch. 5, and in Lopez 1995b: Ch. 13 (women's pilgrim songs). A recent book on Avalokiteśvara in China is Yü 2001 (book not seen).
52. A detailed study of the transformation is Stein 1986 (book not seen). See also Ch'en 1964: 341–2; Blofeld 1977: Ch. 3; cf. Paul 1979: Ch. 7.
53. For a popular Japanese tale of the Buddha Amitābha (closely linked to Avalokiteśvara) manifesting in a vision as a nun as the appropriate form in order to appear to and help a woman, see the paper by Glassman, in Payne and Tanaka 2004: 145, cf. 154.
54. See Lopez 1996: Ch. 5 for early Chinese tales of Guanyin's salvific activities.
55. For illustrations, see van Oort 1986: II, plates 3, 45 and 48, and Zwalf 1985: 209. For an apocryphal Chinese sūtra, with mantras, related to White-Robed Guanyin as a giver of sons and protector in pregnancy (effectively a fertility goddess), see Yü, in Lopez 1996: Ch. 6. Guanyin was frequently the subject of apocryphal Chinese sūtras. For Guanyin spells used in China to save from snakebite, and to bring rain, see Kieschnick 1997: 87.
56. Illustrated in Zwalf 1985: 245, 7. For the war memorial, see Bechert and Gombrich 1984: 179.

57. For a translation and discussion of a Newar devotional ritual to Tārā, involving retelling a story of her salvific appearance to a female petitioner, see Lewis 2000: Ch. 4. He notes (following Gellner 1992) that an old Newar greeting is *tāremāṃ* – 'I take refuge in Tārā'.
58. See Willson 1986: 96, who refers to a study by Ghosh (1980). Tārā is an important figure in some 'Hindu' traditions, particularly in Bengali Tantra where she can take on a very fierce form. Scholars still dispute whether the 'Hindu' or the Buddhist version is earlier. It is possible that the figure originated in an Indian context where it might have been difficult to tell the difference. In the past there has also been some suggestion that the figure of Tārā may have originated not in India but in China.
59. Because of her importance in Newar and Tibetan Buddhism quite a lot of the material on Tārā is ritual and tantric. For a study, see Beyer 1973. For a translation of a Tibetan prayer-flag invocation of Tārā, see Lopez 1997: Ch. 36. For a protective Newar ritual text, see Lewis 2000: Ch. 4. For Newar recourse to Tārā for protection in cases of inauspiciousness, see Gellner 1992: 127–8.
60. For a case of the assimilation of the two in Newar Buddhism, see Gellner 1992: 127.
61. See Gellner 1992: 226 for Newar recourse to either Avalokiteśvara or Tārā at times of great danger for oneself or the family.
62. For a translation, see Willson 1986: 21–2, and Part 2.
63. This is the *700 Verse Perfection of Wisdom*, trans. in Chang 1983 and Conze 1973b.
64. Harrison 2000: 172, italics original. Harrison notes that Mañjuśrī contrasts with Avalokiteśvara, for whom such early Lokakṣema evidence is lacking.
65. See Lamotte 1960: 4 ff.; Gaulier *et al.* 1976: 15. For Mañjuśrī in the early Chinese translations of Lokakṣema, see Harrison 2000.
66. Sen 2003: 77–8; Kieschnick 1997: 105. Gimello (Naquin and Yü 1992: 100), following Lamotte, observes that the relevant section of the sūtra may well have been interpolated in China. The suggestion that Mañjuśrī resided on a mountain in China was also supported by an interpretation of the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* (Sen 2003: 77).
67. Lamotte 1960: 80. For a legendary Chinese account of such a pilgrimage, see Chen 2002: 106 ff. Chen (following Forte) suggests that some Chinese accounts of visits by Indians to Wutai Shan may have been part of Chinese imperial propaganda (Empress Wu again) intended to establish the status of China as the Buddhist 'Middle Kingdom', and the empress/emperor's link to Mañjuśrī. See also Barrett 2001. On how the Chinese used cults of the figures of Śākyamuni, Maitreya, Mañjuśrī and others (relics, sacred mountains etc.) to turn China into a Buddhist realm, see Sen 2003: Ch. 2 (for Wutai Shan, and a discussion of Indian monks who allegedly visited, see *ibid.*: 76–86). For a description of a visit to Wutai in the 1930s, see Blofeld 1959: Ch. 6. On Mañjuśrī and Wutai, see also Kieschnick 1997: 105–7. On a visionary eleventh-century pilgrimage to Wutai Shan, see Gimello, in Naquin and Yü 1992: Ch. 3. Perhaps for geographical as well as spiritual or visionary reasons Wutai Shan does seem to be the sort of place that evokes strange experiences. For a fascinating study of experiences on the

mountain of or related to light and colours in the sky, see Birnbaum 2004. Birnbaum has carried out fieldwork at Wutai. He includes a discussion of Chinese writers, particularly from a Chan background, who express hostility or caution about such visionary experiences.

68. Building, incidentally, on several Indian and Central Asian tantric teachers who had been instrumental in establishing the importance of the Mañjuśrī cult and China for their imperial patrons as the abode of Mañjuśrī, (Sen 2003: 81–3). On the political involvement of Tibetan and Mongolian lamas with the last (Qing; Ch'ing) dynasty, including giving emperors titles of Mañjuśrī and *cakravartin*, as well as tantric empowerments, see Hevia 1993 (on Mañjuśrī, see in particular *ibid*.: 251, 253). Hevia also discusses the benefits – material but particularly magical – for the emperors in the association.
69. Although as the Bodhisattva of wisdom in Nepal, including Newar Buddhism, he is commonly identified with Sarasvatī, the Hindu goddess of learning (Gellner 1992: 84).
70. Chang 1983: 175; cf. Lamotte 1960: 20–3.
71. *Śūraṃgamasamādhi* 1975: 263–4; Lamotte 1960: 30–1. English translation: Kalsang and Pasadika 1975: 44.
72. Welch 1967: 307. For Chinese hagiographical accounts of visions of Mañjuśrī on Wutai Shan, see also the experiences of Fazhao (Fa-chao), in Lopez 1996: Ch. 14. See also Kieschnick 1997: 41 for an account of Mañjuśrī's apparent approval when a monk burnt off a finger on Wutai in his honour (cf. *ibid*.: 37–8, 67 for a Wutai complete immolation).
73. The *Ajātaśatrukaukṛtyavinodanā Sūtra*, quoted in Lamotte 1960: 93–4, and also by Harrison 2000: 169–70.
74. The *Vimaladattāparipṛcchā*, in Chang 1983: 84.
75. Both Bodhisattvas are also important figures in the narrative sculptures at the eighth-/ninth-century stūpa complex of Borobudur, in Java. Once again there is here a specific connection with the *Gaṇḍavyūha/Avataṃsaka Sūtras*, and no doubt (as we find in imperial Tibet at roughly the same time) the use of art to glorify the king through his implied identity with the central Buddha of the *maṇḍala*, Vairocana. Mañjuśrī appears to have been a particularly important figure in Javanese Buddhism. On sources for Samantabhadra in China, see Soper 1959: 221–5. There is a Samantabhadra visualization sūtra which again may well come from Kashmir or an adjacent region. Soper (*ibid*.: 225) notes that a tradition of Samantabhadra's helpful inteventions seems not to have developed in China, at least to the extent of Bodhisattvas like Mañjuśrī and Avalokiteśvara.
76. Illustrated in van Oort 1986: II, plate 13; I confess that I do not find the lion looking sick and unhappy, as van Oort does.
77. Texts with Kṣitigarbha in a noticeable role were first translated into Chinese in the fifth century, and he seems to have been significant in China in some circles from the sixth century onwards, involved with repentance and divination rituals (Teiser 1988a:

186–7). In this role he was an important figure at that time in the Three Stages School, which was subsequently suppressed although why exactly is unclear.

78. Teiser 1988b: 447–9; 1988a: 187; 1994: 67–9. Cf. also the pictures in Teiser 1994.
79. Translated in Hua 1974b: 66 ff. References are to this translation.
80. Hua 1974b: 219–20. Hence the benefit of reading the *sūtras* in the presence of the corpse, and therefore the 'spirit', in the days after death. That something not physical (a 'spirit') survives death, and in some traditions (in Tibet, for example) serves as a link in an intermediate state between incarnations, should not be confused doctrinally with the issue of Self and not-Self in Buddhism. A spirit need not be unchanging, and hence need not be thought of as some sort of true Self. The teaching of an intermediate state between incarnations is commonly found even in Mainstream Buddhism (e.g. in Sarvāstivāda).
81. Abortion as killing might be thought to be completely contrary to Buddhist principles, and Buddhist textual sources generally state that to be the case. But in 1981 it was found that in Japan there were 65–90 abortions per 1,000 women of childbearing age. The figures for Thailand were 37 per 1,000. Comparable figures for the USA were 22.6 per 1,000. In the Theravāda context of modern Thailand a doctrine of skill-in-means on the basis of having a pure virtuous intention in doing the act (e.g. because of danger to the mother) has been used to provide justification for abortion (Tanabe, 'Abortion', in Buswell 2004). For similar statistics, see Harvey 2000: 333. In Japan, when someone has been responsible for an abortion, as well as appropriate domestic rituals, a rite of *mizuko kuyō* ('water child [i.e. fetus] offering ritual') can be sponsored at a Buddhist temple. This may be accompanied with the dedication of a statue of Jizō in which Jizō himself is portrayed in diminutive form looking like a child (as '*both savior and saved*'; LaFleur 1992: 53, italics original) with a baby's bib round his neck, perhaps with the child's name and expressions of regret on it ('Mizuko Kuyō', in Buswell 2004). For abortion and Buddhism (including a discussion of the Japanese situation, with a picture of Jizō statues), see Harvey 2000: Ch. 8, and the papers in Keown 1999. On Buddhism and abortion in contemporary Japan, with abundant material on Jizō and his role, see LaFleur 1992: esp. Ch. 4. LaFleur has reprinted a modern ritual for memorializing an aborted child from this book, together with an introduction, in Tanabe 1999: Ch. 19; cf. also LaFleur 1992: 148–50. This includes setting up Jizō statues, and writing out longhand daily the *Heart Sūtra*, a method it is said whereby one will eventually receive assurance that the aborted child has reached Buddhahood. Appropriate donations to the 'Temple of Jizō on the Mountain of the Purple Cloud' (which specializes in *mizuko kuyō*, and published the text) are also recommended. On religious services in Japan connected with fear of spirits (including spirits of animals such as pets, fish, whales, and insentient things like needles and dolls), and its relevance to *mizuko kuyō* and abortion, see Hoshino and Takeda 1987, and also Brooks 1981: 134–7 (140 for a newspaper advert for Jizō statues to avoid family illness induced by spirits of aborted children). For another example of an apocryphal sūtra related to the hells

and at one time popular in China and Japan, probably composed originally in China, see the *Ketsubonkyō* ('Blood Bowl Sūtra'). This short sūtra describes a hell restricted solely for women, and apparently for all women, because of the demerit of having polluted the earth-deity and river water as a result of their issue of blood through childbirth and menstruation. This is apparently through washing soiled garments, leading to pollution of Buddhist sages who drink tea made from the water. The hell contains a pond composed of menstrual blood, from which the women born there have to drink three times a day. The sūtra describes ritual means (intended particularly for sons, to help through filial piety their mothers) whereby a woman can escape the 'Blood Bowl' hell. The use of this sūtra, at least in Japan, has been closely linked with the salvific powers of Jizō, and also Kannon (Avalokiteśvara). At one time, copies of the text might be placed in women's coffins, or in order to help women thrown into ponds or rivers (sometimes with reddish water) that looked like the pond of the Blood Bowl hell. It was also used until quite recently as a protective talisman, including for safe births (see Takemi 1983; Kōdate 2004 – picture of an amulet, *ibid*.: 136).

82. Gaulier *et al.* 1976: plate 69; cf. plates 67–8.
83. See the illustrations in, e.g., Okazaki 1977: 160–3.
84. There has been very little scholarly study of Akṣobhya and Abhirati. Along with the translations listed below, for further details, see Nattier 2000.
85. From the partial translation in Chang 1983: 316–18; cf. the French translation by Dantinne 1983: 79 ff.
86. As Nattier 2000: 87 ff. points out, in describing in some detail what Akṣobhya did on his Bodhisattva path, the sūtra indicates what sort of conduct was expected of a Bodhisattva in order that he might acquire the great 'stocks of merit' eventually to become a Buddha. It was viewed by most Indian Buddhists, she notes, as 'an excruciatingly difficult path' (see also Nattier 2003b: 183). And to obtain the great insight needed for Buddhahood, the wisdom of a Buddha, also entails travelling to other realms to learn from innumerable Buddhas. How else could anyone follow the Bodhisattva path and become a Buddha? As Nattier 2003b: 183–4 points out, learning all that was necessary would be very difficult in our world now bereft of a Buddha to teach us and not expecting another one (Maitreya) for a very long time.
87. The fact that there are women and child-bearing in Abhirati is a point worth noting, for it is usually said that these two features are specifically denied of Amitāyus's Sukhāvatī. However, Paul Harrison (1998) has shown that actually as regards Sukhāvatī the situation is textually complex. While the two oldest Chinese translations of the *Sukhāvatīvyūha Sūtra* are explicit that women are not reborn there in the form of women, later Chinese translations, as well as the Tibetan and the Sanskrit, are unclear. Harrison suggests that as the sūtra's Pure Land Buddhism became more popular it may have been rewritten to soften or make more ambiguous its hardline (and forest hermit ascetic) stance (cf. also Nattier 2003b: 192). He also points out that while

certain recensions of the sūtra text itself are ambiguous, the classical Buddhist tradition has always held that there are no women as women in Sukhāvatī. However in the East Asian Pure Land tradition it seems that Hōnen stated explicitly that women can enter Sukhāvatī while still in the female form (Blum 2002: 19–20, n. 29). For a popular Japanese tale in which a woman attains the Pure Land in her female form, see the paper by Glassman, in Payne and Tanaka 2004: 146. Glassman (*ibid*.: 159–60) also draws attention to the Japanese Mt Kumano, which was apparently famously welcoming to female pilgrims and possessed an 'army of intinerant female preachers' who were specialists in explaining visions, particularly relating to the afterlife (see also Kōdate 2004: 128–30, 103–4).

88. Chang 1983: 325. Note, however, that while it is possible to become an Arhat very easily and there are many Bodhisattvas in Abhirati, it is not possible actually to attain Buddhahood there, since a Bodhisattva has already done so and become Akṣobhya. For this sūtra, reflecting old Buddhist ideas, there can be only one Buddha in a Buddha Field at a time. Those who wish to can become Arhats. There is hence no suggestion that all should be Bodhisattvas, or suggestion of only One Vehicle. But those who have taken on the horribly hard path of Bodhisattvas and are in Abhirati can visit other realms to receive teachings, and further develop on their path to Buddhahood. Eventually when the time is right they will find some other appropriate place bereft of Buddhism to become Buddhas, and thus another Buddha Land will have been created. For discussion, see Nattier 2000: 89 ff., 2003b: 185–7. Nattier argues that once we understand the need for other realms simply in order to practise and complete the Bodhisattva path, we can see that as the idea of the Bodhisattva path developed in India as an option for a small but significant minority so the doctrine of Pure Lands was a necessary corollary. Otherwise it would be difficult to see how all these Bodhisattvas could ever complete their path, granted its phenomenal length. We might add also that it is in this context that one should understand tantric practices such as dream yoga and the illusory body, enabling one to leave the gross physical body in dreams or in visions in order actually quickly and simultaneously to travel to multiple other realms and make offerings to innumerable real contemporary Buddhas that dwell there, doing wondrous acts of merit and attaining great understanding (see, e.g., Cozort 1986: 102, 112).
89. Until nearly the end, when it is said that rebirth in Abhirati is actually easy. It comes from accepting, memorizing and spreading the sūtra itself (Nattier 2000: 91–2). Sensibly, as with many Mahāyāna sūtras, the future of its enthusiastic advocates (and that of their convinced converts) is ensured even if realistically their actual spiritual attainments may be relatively mediocre.
90. Having said that, Nattier 2000: 83 suggests that the sūtra often seems to be less interested in the manner by which one can be reborn in Abhirati than with encouraging Bodhisattvas to follow Akṣobhya's pattern and obtain such a Buddha Field for themselves through their own achievement of Buddhahood.

91. Chang 1983: 331; cf. Yamada 1968: I, 242 ff. This is a phenomenon which has Tibetan parallels, where the cremation of great lamas is sometimes held to have occurred spontaneously, without human intervention. Whether it has any connection to reputed spontaneous human combustion through the power of meditative absorption found in Chinese Buddhism (see the references in Benn 2007a) I do not know, nor indeed whether it may reflect in some way actual practices of any Akṣobhya cult there may have been in north-west India or Central Asia. The idea that the Buddha in a Pure Land will eventually enter a final nirvāṇa and be followed by a successor is obviously a very early Mahāyāna model, reflecting the early Buddhist model of Śākyamuni. It is also found with reference to Amitābha in the early Lokakṣema Chinese translation of the Larger *Sukhāvatīvyūa Sūtra*. Amitābha will be succeeded by Avalokiteśvara and then by Mahāsthāmaprāpta. It is apparently not found in the later versions (see Nattier 2003b: 191, cf. 192).
92. See Nattier 2000: 81 ff. She also points (*ibid*.: 83) out that life in Abhirati resembles an idealized monastic community. Cf. Paul Harrison on Amitābha's Pure Land of Sukhāvatī: 'I now believe that Sukhāvatī is the forest hermitage or monastery writ large, a perfect environment for strenuous religious practice, not for pleasurable enjoyment' ('personal communication' quoted in Ducor 2004: 378, n. 119).
93. It is often said that it is from round about this late period that most of the Indian figures of Akṣobhya come, where he is usually represented as a Buddha, sometimes crowned, in a lotus posture with his left hand on his lap and right hand outstretched to touch the earth. However, Jacob N. Kinnard has cautioned that it is sometimes difficult to know whether late Indian figures of this type, particularly in isolation, are meant to represent Akṣobhya or whether they are simply Śākyamuni, who continues to be an important sculptural figure, in the position of touching the earth at his enlightenment. The distinctive feature of Akṣobhya is in addition a single elephant (his 'vehicle') at the base of the stele (Kinnard 1996: 290–3), and such figures are very much less common.
94. For a comprehensive essay on Buddhism and healing, see Demiéville 1985. For the medicinal use of recollection of the name of Amitābha Buddha (*nianfo*; see below) in modern Chinese Buddhism, see Jones 2001: 223, 234. Thus not all recollection of the name of the Buddha is for rebirth in his Pure Land. Jones notes cases historically where the recitation of the name of Amitābha has been used for a range of 'this-worldly' purposes, such as longevity of the emperor or material prosperity.
95. Birnbaum 1980: 56–7; Soper 1959: 170 notes that some sections are 'unmistakenly Chinese'. The quotations from the *Bhaisajyaguru Sutras* are taken from the Birnbaum translation; cf. Nakamura 1980: 181.
96. On the fairly late appearance of Bhaiṣajyaguru in China, see Soper 1959: 169. Soper suggests that since, like Akṣobhya, Bhaiṣajyaguru's Pure Land is in the East, Bhaiṣajyaguru replaced Akṣobhya – who was never popular – in East Asian Buddhism.

97. On the way Sukhāvatī in Mahāyāna has become a 'generalized religious goal', quite separate from specific connection with any Amitābha cult, see Schopen 2005: Ch. 5. As simply 'the happy place' it could hence also come to mean, or potentially be argued by exegetes to mean, the ultimate religious goal of Buddhahood itself.
98. From Birnbaum's translation: 1980: 162. Such encapsulates rather well, I think, a developed Buddhist cult of the Buddha, although whether it corresponds to much actual cultic practice in India itself we simply do not know. Surviving archaeological evidence suggests not.
99. Cf. Western accounts of near-death states. There is also a considerable Tibetan literature on people who have returned from the dead and describe their experiences – the *'das log* (pronounced: day lok). See Pommaret 1989, Pommaret's article in Lopez 1997: Ch. 32, and also Epstein, in Williams 2005b: Ch. 76.
100. *Encylopaedia of Buddhism* 1966: 664–5.
101. See Birnbaum 1987: 129. The plant appears to be missing in East Asian representations. In Japan, for example, the Buddha often holds his right hand, palm facing outwards, in the posture of banishing fear. We also sometimes find Bhaiṣajyaguru's right hand raised in the offering gesture.
102. I omit here any discussion of Vairocana as a Buddha with a Pure Land, an idea that has been of some importance in Chinese Buddhism particularly Huayan. For a short introduction, see Xing 2005: 169–71.
103. For more on the textual sources relating to this dispute, with a defence of the idea from the Mahāyāna *Dazhidulun* and evidence for a conclusion that the concept of contemporary Buddhas grew up among the Mahāsāṃghikas, see Xing 2005: 62–6; cf. 165–7. Xing points out that the notion of a Pure Land also lays stress on the Mahāyāna goal, Buddhahood, as an active, engaged, beneficial achievement rather than 'an inactive and indefinable state likened to the blowing out of a lamp'.
104. Paul Harrison (private note) points out to me that the *Pratyutpanna Sūtra* and the Larger *Sukhāvatīvyūha Sūtra*, both translated by Lokakṣema, indicate that the association with *buddhānusmṛti* had already taken place by the middle of the second century CE. See also the very clear and helpful overview of the Indian historical and doctrinal background to the emergence of Pure Lands in Nattier 2003b, which is broadly similar to that of Tanaka (and also Fujita), although Nattier also stresses (I think correctly) the importance of reflection on actual visions in deep meditation in generating the idea of current Buddha Fields (Nattier 2003b: 184–5, 193). Nattier also introduces the significance, strangely omitted in much Japanese scholarship in this area, of Akṣobhya's Pure Land. On what she sees as the differences between the Abhirati and the Sukhāvatī traditions, see *ibid.*: 187 ff. (cf. also Nattier 2000).
105. See Tanaka 1990: 3; cf. also Soper 1959: 146 (still relevant, although he is now slightly outdated on the archaeology; for an up-to-date summary of the epigraphical and archaeological sources in India for Amitābha and Sukhāvatī, see Ducor 2004: 358–68 (a critical review of Fussman 1999; book not seen). The first person to speak of some

sort of Pure Land 'school' appears to have been the Korean Wŏnhyo, writing in the seventh century about developments in China (Chappell 1996: 140, 167). But on the sense in which there was rarely if ever an institutionally identifiable independent Pure Land school (*zong*; *tsung*) in Chinese Buddhism, see Stevenson, in Lopez 1995b: 359, cf. 366–7. Cf. also Ducor 1999: 149–50. The Japanese Hōnen claims himself to have consolidated the Pure Land tradition as an actual sect or doctrinal school (*shū*; see the quotation in *Senchakushū* English Translation Project 1998: 34–5. On Hōnen's role in identifying Pure Land as a school, see also Andrews 1987a, esp. 480 ff.; on the 'Pure Land Canon', see *ibid*.: 488–9).

106. Fujita 1996b: 35 notes that the views of the three sūtras are sometimes at variance with references to Amitābha and Sukhāvatī in other Mahāyāna sources.
107. Nakamura 1980: 205. The textual history of this sūtra is rather complex. Fragments of another Sanskrit recension have recently found their way to the Schøyen collection and are edited and translated, with an introduction, in Braarvig 2002: Ch. 8.
108. A point made by Fujita in 1996b: 9. This study, based on one published in Japanese in 1970, has been very influential on, e.g., Tanaka. See also Soper 1959: 142–3 for arguments in favour of the greater antiquity of the shorter sūtra (a position also favoured by Gómez 1996: 226), although Soper takes it that the shorter sūtra is a primitive version of a single sūtra also represented by the longer sūtra.
109. On the vows in the sūtras see, e.g., Fujita 1996b: 16–20. For theological reflections on how the vows in Indian Mahāyāna mediate between the 'empty' state of the Buddha's nonconceptual awareness – his 'absence' – and his presence, his ability spontaneously to have a beneficial effect on sentient beings, see Eckel 2003: 61–6 (with references to Eckel 1992). Pure Land sources frequently refer to things happening 'through the sustaining power of the Buddha's previous vows'.
110. Vow 2. See the Chinese version (Inagaki 1995: 32) and the Sanskrit, trans. Gómez 1996: 69. Where they differ, the vow numbering used is that of the Chinese version. Gómez also translates the Shorter *Sukhāvatīvyūha* from the Sanskrit, and the Chinese versions, and gives a very accessible commentary to the translations.
111. Vow 11. In fact, as vow 47 (Sanskrit 46) makes clear, they attain the 'nonretrogressive' or 'irreversible' state, from which there can be no backsliding in their Bodhisattva path. In terms of the traditional Bodhisattva way to full Buddhahood this would normally be achieved at the very end of the astonishingly advanced seventh Bodhisattva stage (see Chapter 9 above). The interpretation of this vow is important in subsequent Japanese Buddhism.
112. Vow 18; this is the crucial vow, and is taken from the 'Saṅghavarman' version trans. in Inagaki (1995: 34). Gómez's translation of the same version reads 'bring to mind this aspiration' rather than 'call on the name'. The Sanskrit version (Gómez 1996: 71) differs in detail ('made the resolution only ten times') and so does the Bodhiruci version of the Chinese translated in Chang (Chang 1983: 342). In both cases, for example, directing of merit to the Pure Land is required. These considerable ambiguities are

important for later developments in Chinese and Japanese Buddhism (see below). Is it necessary to engage in some sort of mental cultivation ('bringing to mind', as in *buddhānusmṛti*-type visualization in meditation, perhaps leading to *samādhi*, deep absorption) in order to be reborn in the Pure Land, or (as is implied by Inagaki's translation) is simply vocally calling on the name of Amitābha enough? Or should it be some combination of these? How much self-cultivation, which may be accessible only to renunciates like monks, is necessary to be the recipient of Amitābha's goodwill and help? Is such self-cultivation really possible for most people nowadays? Can Amitābha, out of his compassion, bring to his Pure Land even those (such as most of the laity) who are incapable of self-cultivation?

113. Cf. vow 18 in Gómez's 1996 translation from the Sanskrit. The order and some details of vows 18–21 are different in the Sanskrit. Cf. also Bodhiruci's version in Chang 1983: 352–3.

114. Vow 22 (Sanskrit 21). Beings in Sukhāvatī as only one birth from Buddhahood would seem to be even more advanced than the end of the seventh or the eighth Bodhisattva stage, for they seem to have the same status as that traditionally given to Maitreya (effectively the ninth or (normally) tenth stage). But note that beings in Sukhāvatī can if they wish have an unlimited lifespan and hence enjoy their time in Sukhāvatī for as long as they want to. That no one attains Buddhahood in this Pure Land itself, since there cannot be two Buddhas in the same Buddha Land, is made very clear by the early Lokakṣema Chinese translation of the Larger *Sukhāvatīvyūa Sūtra* (Nattier 2003: 191–2).

115. This suggests that the sūtra is thinking of two different routes to Buddhahood, a long one involving more altruistic acts *before* becoming a Buddha and a quick one, becoming a Buddha in the very next life (see below on the 'easy' and 'difficult' ways). From the point of view of developed Mahāyāna Buddhology this position would be doctrinally controversial if a Buddha has greater abilities to help than a Bodhisattva. As we saw in Chapter 2, why would anyone want to put off for altruistic reasons becoming a Buddha, if a Buddha has greater abilities to help than a Bodhisattva and the whole point of becoming a Bodhisattva is to help others as much as possible? But as Ducor observes, following Lamotte, these are a type of texts that represent 'un Mahāyāna en formation' (2004: 395). Their overriding concern is to make available the Dharma preached directly by a Buddha in the absence of Śākyamuni, and also to give access to a Bodhisattva's state of irreversibility for a much greater number of aspirants (*ibid.*: 396). It seems that other doctrinal issues have not yet really been thought through.

116. See Harrison 2003: 120–2. Harrison points out that the long and rather tedious (to our minds) descriptions of Amitābha and Sukhāvatī are even more so and also more systematic in the earlier Chinese translations than in the Sanskrit and the Tibetan versions. The sheer detail makes sense when it is realized that these are prescriptions for complex visualization. The text is not to be read but to be *performed* (Harrison's stress). On the origin of the concept of Sukhāvatī, see Fujita 1996a: 37 ff., 1996b: 20–6.

117. Nattier 2003: 194 suggests that in making the attaining of the goal of the Bodhisattva path easier, these Pure Land ideas paved the way for the development of the idea of the One Vehicle that is found in the *Lotus Sūtra*.
118. Late Kamakura painting, in Okazaki 1977: 130; cf. 131.
119. Cf. here Kṛṣṇa in the *Bhagavad Gītā* 8: 5–6 (Buitenen 1981).
120. Pas 1977: 210. For another study of the issues by a leading authority, see Fujita 1990. Fujita too suggests the meditation practices, while having a Chinese colouring in the sūtra, might well reflect practices current in Central Asia, possibly Turfan. See also Tanaka 1990: 38–40, who summarizes arguments for and against China or Central Asia, and notes recent Japanese arguments (Meiji Yamada) that strengthen the China theory.
121. This appears certainly to be a Chinese interpolation; see Pas 1977: 210.
122. Whalen Lai (Foard *et al.* 1996: 185; cf. 214–15) translates a Chinese source, which tells how a monk did not keep the precepts and even stole donations to the Order. He then left and joined the army, before returning to the monastic state to avoid some trouble. When this monk died he was heading for hell, but found himself in the Pure Land. This was primarily due to his regular recitation of the Buddha's name. Had he not been saved from hell and attained the Pure Land, he told Yama, the god of the dead and king of the hells, the Buddhas would have lied. On the particular interest, at least in eleventh-century Japan, of the *blind* in these visualization practices and the hope of visionary experiences, especially seeing Amitābha's light, see Yiengpruksawan: 'Michinaga may have wanted to be reborn in Sukhāvatī, but first he wanted to be able to see' (in Kapstein 2004: 254).
123. There is considerable doubt about its attribution to Nāgārjuna, however, and it survives only in a Chinese version. It does not appear to be known elsewhere in Sanskrit or Tibetan sources.
124. From Shinran's quotation in the *Kyōgyōshinshō* (Shinran 1997, vol. 1: 22). The term translated as 'entrusting' is the Japanese *shinjin*, which is often translated as 'faith'. It is an equivalent for the Chinese (*xinxin*; *hsin hsin* – 'mind of faith'), corresponding frequently to the Sanskrit *cittaprasāda*, mental clarity. Indeed, defining the term that is most commonly translated as 'faith' (*śraddhā*), the *Abhidharmakośa* commentary (Vasubandhu 1970–3) explains that it is actually mental clarity (*cetasaḥ prasādaḥ*; on 2: 25). This definition is not itself very lucid, but it becomes clearer in the light of a discussion contained in a Pāli text, the *Milindapañha*. Faith 'makes serene'. 'When faith arises it arrests the (five) Hindrances, and the heart becomes free from them, clear, serene and undisturbed.' Faith clears the mind of its muddy defilements, as a miraculous gem might clear muddy water for drinking (Conze 1959: 152). On the concept of 'faith' in Buddhism and the Pure Land tradition, see Eckel 2003: 66–71. On the Sanskrit terms, see also Fujita 1996b: 29–31. There is considerable disagreement on whether it is helpful to translate the relevant Sanskrit terms (notably *śraddhā* and *cittaprasāda*) and their equivalents in other Asian languages by 'faith', which sometimes

conveys unhelpful Christian connotations. The many studies comparing Luther and Shinran on faith are perhaps generated simply by the choice of translation. Either way, it may be preferable to think of the Buddhist concept here as nearer 'trust', 'confident trust' or 'trusting mind', the state of mind that results from or is associated with serene mental clarity, free from anxious doubt, than to get caught up in unhelpful assimilation to certain ways of understanding Christianity. The translators' use here of 'entrusting' is an attempt to capture that idea and is much preferable to 'faith'. See also Payne 1996: 247–8. On *shinjin* in Shinran as 'self-abandonment', see below.

125. Criticisms like those of Asaṅga may have been widely held, particularly among Buddhist 'professionals'. That may go some way towards explaining the lack of evidence in Indian Buddhism for any extensive involvement in Pure Land practice devoted to Amitābha.
126. Asaṅga 1938: vol. 2, 130, Tibetan text *ibid.*: vol. 1, 41. Cf. Keenan 1992: 55. The same criticism can be traced in the *Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra*. See also Fujita 1996b: 33–4.
127. See Jones 2004. As a result of one day of intensive practice, Jones himself had a brief but distinct vision of what would seem to have been the Pure Land of Sukhāvatī. Clearly such intensive practice can be a powerful and effective means for transforming visual awareness. One wonders what the effect of one or more three-year Pure Land 'sealed confinement' retreats would be (see Stevenson, in Lopez 1995b: 367).
128. In other words the 'easiness' of the Pure Land path in itself is doctrinally nothing to do with concessions to the simple, the masses, or the laity, or a bid for popular support even if the simple, the masses and the laity understandably often found it somewhat more realistic as a practical path, and deeply attractive.
129. For reflections on the Pure Land tradition as Mahāyāna, and the way in which it expresses themes in Buddhism of both faith and hope for the future, see Gómez 2000. See below for comments on the apparent easiness of Shinran's understanding of Pure Land Buddhism.
130. Chappell 1977: 24. Cf. Pas 1987: 78. Weinstein, Pas and Chappell all refer to work by Tsukamoto.
131. Bloom 1965: 10–11; cf. Corless 1996: 123–4. For a series of papers on Tanluan and his role in the development of Pure Land thought, particularly his influence on Shinran, see the special issue of *Pacific World: Journal of the Institute of Buddhist Studies*, Third series, Number 2, Fall 2000.
132. Corless (1987: 39) notes that this particular interest in the theory of visualization seems to have been without precedent in Chinese Buddhism, and he traces it to Tanluan's former involvement with Daoist meditation.
133. He explicitly relates this to the process of using magic spells (Corless 1987: 40; cf. also Corless 1996: 125–8).
134. Kiyota 1978a: 274; de Bary *et al.* 1960: 379; cf. Corless 1996: 135–6.
135. The Pure Land for Tanluan has effectively blended with the Daoist Land of the Immortals. See de Bary *et al.* 1960: 380; Corless 1987: 40–1, 1996: 114. For how Tanluan's

reading here differs from that of the Sanskrit (and also the 'Saṅghavarman') see Corless 1996: 121 and n. 22. For good short introductions to Tanluan, see Corless 1987 (draws out in particular the extent to which Tanluan still operated as a Daoist, and the way in which his Pure Land interests blended with the Daoist search for physical immortality; cf. Corless 1996: 108–10), Corless 1995b (treats Tanluan in the context of Pure Land spirituality), and Corless 1996 (more detail).

136. Chappell 1996: 149 ff. Chappell suggests that Daochuo reflects here not just a social, economic and political crisis but also a religious crisis. With new and often conflicting Buddhist texts and practices regularly reaching China from India and Central Asia (not to mention the problem of which were to count as authentic) Chinese Buddhist scholars were becoming very unsure that they could understand Buddhism or see how it all fitted together, let alone practise it properly in order to become fully-enlightened Buddhas. As Shandao expressed it, apparently after trying to study Mādhyamika, 'those who choose enlightenment through understanding will find it hard to understand' (Pas 1987: 66). Part of the problem, Chappell observes, was that the Chinese took these salvific texts so seriously (Chappell 1996: 171; perhaps this reflects the central role of understanding 'the Classics' in Chinese culture). The great advantage of a Pure Land is not only that there are no barbarian invasions or starvation, but also there is a resident Buddha who is willing and happy to teach. Buddhism is difficult. If you want to understand and practise Buddhism it is best to ask a Buddha, and through Pure Land practice the way to find a Buddha is relatively straightforward and simple.
137. Bloom 1965: 11–13; Weinstein 1987: 70–1. On Daochuo and Shandao in their cultural context, see Chappell 1996. On how Daochuo apparently introduced the use of a rosary for the first time in East Asia, see *ibid*.: 156–7. He is said to have managed 70,000 recitations a day. Chappell points out that there are 86,400 seconds in a day.
138. De Bary *et al.* 1960: 381 ff. For translation of a lovely piece by Zhuhong in which he replies to a visitor who tries too readily to 'demythologize' the Pure Land as being in reality 'mind-only', see Whalen Lai, in Foard *et al.* 1996: 209–10 (cf. Jones 2001: 226–8 – Zhuhong holds it is better to be an ignorant peasant reciting with hope the name of the Buddha than an educated monk who thinks himself already enlightened). Cf. Jixing Chewu's (Chi-hsing Ch'o-wu; 1741–1810) attempt to reconcile the actual literal existence of the Pure Land with the teaching of mind-only (Jones 2000: 58 ff.; see also Jones 2001: 228–30).
139. For his part Shandao stresses that Amitābha should be understood as an Enjoyment Body Buddha, not (as some were saying in order to disparage Pure Land practice) a Transformation Body (see Chapter 8 above).
140. Benn 2007a: 98, 216; Chappell 1996: 164–5; Weinstein 1987: 72; Pas 1987: 65, 70; Matsunaga and Matsunaga 1974/6: II, 27. By way of contrast, several followers of the Japanese mendicant Pure Land *hijiri* ('holy man') Ippen (1239–89) committed suicide in order to hasten their entry into the Pure Land, and were much admired for it by Ippen himself (Foard, in Foard *et al.* 1996: 382; this continued after Ippen's death, with

suicide by drowning particularly favoured. See also Moerman 2007: 270, and Hirota 1997: xliv–xlvi). The wandering Pure Land *hijiri*, chanting the name of Amitābha Buddha, perhaps handing out devotional talismans (*fuda*; for an illustrated example, see Hirota 1997: 1) depicting the Buddha or his name, or engaging in ecstatic dancing in honour of the Buddha, and telling miraculous tales of Amitābha, the Pure Land, and his devotees, were particularly important in Japan in widely spreading and popularizing Pure Land practice (see Hori 1958). Ippen himself founded a mendicant Pure Land *hijiri* order, the *Jishū*, distinct from the traditions of, e.g., Hōnen and Shinran (see *ibid.*; cf. also Hirota 1989 and 1997 (for charming Japanese illustrations of 'dancing *nenbutsu*', see Hirota 1997: xxxviii, 128), and Thornton, in Tanabe 1999: Ch. 18).

141. Ch'en 1964: 347. A fragment of one of the copies he made survives (Chappell 1996: 163). On the importance of art in Shandao's spirituality, see *ibid.*: 160–1, and Pas 1987: 66, 69, 77–8. Shandao was asked by Empress Wu to oversee the construction of the great image of Vairocana at Longmen (see Chapter 6 above). Notwithstanding this being of Vairocana (if originally it was – Pas 1987: 78 refers to a hypothesis that it may have been of Amitābha and later renamed), it seems to have been Shandao, more than anyone else, who was responsible for the way in which Amitābha statues at the Longmen caves at this time came far to exceed those of Śākyamuni and Maitreya.
142. Pas 1987; Bloom 1965: 13. Interestingly, Shandao also argues that for the laity filial piety, service to their parents, is equivalent to the service given to the Buddha by monks and nuns. In keeping with Chinese sensitivities and tradition parents hence become a supreme 'field of merit' (Pas 1987: 73–5; Chappell 1996: 161–2).
143. Much later in China, though, Jixing Chewu argued that one of the advantages of the Pure Land way is that through relying on the power of the Buddha there is no need to confess one's previous misdeeds (Jones 2000: 50).
144. Weinstein 1987: 72; Pas 1987: 79–80; cf. Ch'en 1964: 346. Pas 1987: 79–80 argues that for Shandao both reciting the Buddha's name and visualization meditation are equally important, with meditative vision the superior one. The ideal is that they should be practised together. Pas's interpretation of this theme is controversial (see Ducor 1999, a review of Pas 1995; book not seen).
145. Pas 1974, 1987: 70, 75–7, 79; Chappell 1996: 160, 162. Pas 1987: 75–6 translates a piece by Shandao on how to conduct a *buddhānusmṛti* retreat. It reminds the reader of the instructions in the *Pratyutpanna Sūtra*. While visualizing and chanting, the aspirant should not sleep throughout the seven days of the retreat. Even Shandao, who did so much to make Pure Land teaching available to all, seems to have advocated an austere practice where possible and useful. For another translation, see Stevenson, in Lopez 1995b: 377–9.
146. Translation in de Bary *et al.* 1972: 205–6; cf. the Japanese paintings of the parable in Okazaki 1977: 148–9.
147. Weinstein 1987: 73–4; Ch'en 1964: 348–50. For a translation of accounts by and about Fazhao of his visionary experiences, including one found at Dunhuang telling

of how he learned the correct way of reciting the name, see Stevenson, in Lopez 1996: Ch. 14. Fazhao seems to have been keen on the *pratyutpanna samādhi* retreat. For translations relating to Chinese Pure Land ritual, see Stevenson, in Lopez 1995b: 371 ff.

148. In fact there are Chinese sources that refer to 48 different methods of *nianfo*, each for different purposes or circumstances (Jones 2000: 48; Jones 2001: 234–5). Note the resultant ambiguity in the Chinese concept of *nianfo* and this historical development of *buddhānusmṛti*, which has come to refer to a range of practices from mentally contemplating through to simple oral recitation and combinations of those (Jones 2000: 50; Stevenson, in Lopez 1995b: 360 ff.; for a more detailed study, see Jones 2001).
149. For a study of a Chan master, Jixing Chewu who in midlife gave up Chan to devote himself to Pure Land practice, see Jones 2000. For Chewu, the moment the name of Amitābha fills the mind; the mind at that moment *is* Amitābha Buddha, who is the innate enlightened Buddha-nature itself. Hence if the mind is constantly full of the name of the Buddha, the mind *is* constantly that of the Buddha. Thereby the innate enlightenment, which is always present, is actualized (*ibid.*: 54 ff.). Pure Land practice is thus a perfectly orthodox form of Mahāyāna Buddhism. Moreover, at death the mind will also be full of Amitābha, and rebirth in the Pure Land will be assured. On the different approaches in China to the relationship between the Pure Land and the mind-only teachings, see *ibid.*: 59 ff.
150. Yanshou has long been read as simply synthesizing Chan and Pure Land into some sort of 'dual practice'. Recent scholarship suggests the situation is a good deal more complicated. His emphasis on the primacy of Mind suggests rather that he reads Pure Land very much through the eyes of Chan (as just a skilful means for beginners), and that he may well have preference for Chan meditation (see Jones 2000: 66–7). His vision of Pure Land practice certainly seems rather different from that of, say, Shandao. See Benn 2007a: 110, 284 and references. For other critical Chan responses and uses of Pure Land, see Jones 2001: 230–3. For the Zen (Chan) criticisms of Pure Land practice in Japan, see Ingram 1973.
151. As Andrews 2004: 89 observes: 'Institutional Pure Land Buddhism in Japan prior to Hōnen was based upon continental [i.e. mainly Chinese] models – largely monastic and emphasizing contemplative practice; after Hōnen it became entirely a layperson's Buddhism, emphasizing devotion'. Later he notes that this is 'with few exceptions' (*ibid.*: 102).
152. Andrews 1994: 99–100 notes that in Japan between 985 and the twelfth century the anxiety 'amounting to almost a certainty' about falling into hell appears to have noticeably increased. Hence the importance of practices, Buddhas and Bodhisattvas associated with avoiding such a fate.
153. Note that it was by no means the case that all Japanese Buddhist thinkers accepted the pessimism about contemporary human potential implied in the theory of *mappō*, with its corollary that practising the old Buddhist teachings was no longer realistic.

For an example of one who certainly did not, and for that reason among others strongly opposed Hōnen, see Myōe Shōnin in Tanabe 1992: e.g. 46. Myōe was also very much a monk.

154. Machida 1999: 119. But note that deliberately 'concealing one's virtue' (even from oneself), and speaking and perhaps sometimes acting as if one had no spiritual attainments whatsoever, was a strategy much admired among Japanese Pure Land advocates, as contributing to the overcoming of pride and hence to the full realization of not-Self, and indicating humility (see Hirota 1989: xi–xlii).
155. To this extent we can see Hōnen as instrumental in the evolution of that 'exclusivist' tradition in Kamakura (1185–1333) Japanese religion taken up and most commonly associated with Nichiren and his followers (see Stone 1994: 232). On the importance of Shandao (considered a manifestation of Amitābha himself) for Hōnen, see, e.g., Andrews 1987b: 16–20, and Andrews 1994: 102–6. For a strongly critical response to Hōnen from within the Zen tradition, by the great Rinzai Zen master Hakuin (1686–1768), see Ingram 1973. For Hakuin, Buddhism rejects all 'Other Power', seeing enlightenment as coming from one's own efforts ('Own Power') alone. Recitation of the name of Amitābha is at the most a skilful means, a practice only for those of inferior capacities. Attaining the Pure Land is really 'seeing into your own nature', i.e. Zen enlightenment. And Hakuin rejected the idea that the Last Days of the Dharma entailed pessimism about the possibility of enlightenment through one's own striving, which was always a difficult thing to achieve. Actually Pure Land practice detracts from seriously striving for enlightenment (*ibid.*: 189 ff.). Those Pure Land practitioners such as Hōnen who nevertheless *do* attain some sort of enlightenment, even if not complete enlightenment, have done so because the *nenbutsu* practice led to glimpsing their own nature through a direct if partial insight (*ibid.*: 192–4). And the Pure Land teachings are dualistic. There is really no such being as Amitābha Buddha apart from one's own mind (*ibid.*: 195). Only when this is realized can there be true enlightenment. But for the controversial wider use of Pure Land practice and imagery within some streams of the Rinzai Zen tradition, see the paper by Jaffe, in Payne and Tanaka 2004: Ch. 7.
156. It seems that it was for this reason that the radical implications of Hōnen's teaching were fully appreciated probably also only after his death.
157. Trans. in *Senchakushū* English Translation Project 1998: 13. The 'Introduction' to this book is a very accessible survey of Hōnen's views and significance. On the *Senchakushū* in its historical context, and its role in the establishment of Hōnen's school of 'exclusive *nenbutsu*', see also Andrews 1987a, and Andrews 2004. The Japanese mendicant 'holy man' (*hijiri*) Ippen burnt all his own writings before his death in order to show that (even though for his part he accepted all the Buddhist and Shintō deities as incorporated into the *nenbutsu*) relying on the *nenbutsu* alone was sufficient for salvation (see Foard, in Foard *et al.* 1996: 385–7).
158. From a letter trans. by Coates and Ishizuka, quoted in Burtt 1955: 214.

159. Translation of the 'One Page Document' in Eliot 1935: 267. For another translation, see Hirota 1989: 71–2. For translations of Hōnen's *Senchakushū*, see Augustine and Kondō 1997, and *Senchakushū* English Translation Project 1998.
160. Machida 1999: 120, italics original. Machida's book is a controversial but interesting set of cultural-historical reflections on Hōnen's person and influence. Cf. Stone, in Payne and Tanaka 2004: 98–9. One advocate of the *nenbutsu*, Shinkyō, was not alone in teaching that the warrior need chant the *nenbutsu* in battle only once (Stone, *ibid*.: 99). The warrior warlord Yoritomo Minamoto, involved in the vicious warfare of the era between the Minamoto and the Taira clans, used to carry a protective statue of Amitābha into battle (Tanabe 1992: 41). Hōnen was himself from the warrior class.
161. This is through the merit they gained by joining the order. But Hōnen also held that the *nenbutsu* had protective powers, against 'evil spirits, sudden illness, untimely death, and all misfortunes and calamities' (Andrews 2004: 105, n. 39; reference to *Senchakushū* Ch. 15; cf. n. 53).
162. And also the extent to which he was truly 'exclusivist', at least as this was interpreted by Nichiren and his exclusivist followers of the *Lotus Sūtra*. Rather, Hōnen seems to have thought that with constant *nenbutsu* recitation all practices – all life – can become a way of salvation (*Senchakushū* English Translation Project 1998: 13–14). Whatever facilitates the recitation of the Buddha's name should be adopted; what interrupts it should be rejected. Moreover other Buddhist practices may lead to and encourage the adoption of the *nenbutsu* (*ibid*.: 37 ff.). To this extent he is in a sense maximally *inclusivist* rather than exclusivist: 'Hōnen's thought can be seen as striking a balance between the revolutionary rejection of traditional Mahāyāna thought and the eventual reaffirmation of the whole of the same tradition' (*ibid*.: 37). On the evolution and interpretation of Hōnen's idea of 'exclusive *nenbutsu*', the *nenbutsu* as the only effective practice applicable in the present age and to all people, see *ibid*.: 35 ff. On the superiority and sufficiency of the *nenbutsu* cf. *Senchakushū* English Translation Project 1998: Ch. 3, see also Andrews 2004: 91–2.
163. Matsunaga and Matsunaga 1974/6: II, 66. On opposition to Hōnen, see *Senchakushū* English Translation Project 1998: 15 ff., and also Ford 2001, which deals sympathetically with Hōnen's 'traditionalist' critics, particularly the nine-point attack (he also suggests *ibid*.: 207 that we should be careful about expressions like 'Own Power' and 'Other Power', which in their Japanese context may have become rhetorical labels often simply used to denigrate ideological opponents). Of course the wide appeal of Hōnen's teaching could be economically dangerous for the other schools that might face withdrawal of patronage. The warrior nobility were particularly attracted to a simple practice that did not make a great fuss about morality (see Andrews 1987a: 477–8). And it has been suggested that Hōnen's emphasis on the 'exclusive *nenbutsu*' may itself owe something to the Japanese samurai warrior virtue of exclusive and unquestioning loyalty to one's feudal lord (Shigematsu, in Foard *et al*. 1996: 300–1). For Myōe Shōnin on the moral dangers of Hōnen's teachjing, see Tanabe 1992: 104–6.

164. In strictly regulated circumstances meat-eating is permitted by the Buddhist monastic Vinayas. Both Theravāda monks and Tibetan monks and nuns fairly regularly eat meat. However, the influence of several Mahāyāna texts which condemn meat eating, particularly the *Fanwang Jing* ('Brahmā's Net Sūtra') in China has given much of East Asian Buddhism a vegetarian tendency, especially in China. The *Fanwang Jing* is an apocryphal sūtra, probably a Chinese composition. See Ruegg 1980 and the interesting comments in Welch 1967: 112–13.
165. We have an interesting insight into Myōe's spiritual life from the dream diary that he kept for 40 years. Through his meditation he transformed his waking world into a visionary world in which waking world and dream world become one. See Tanabe 1992 (Myōe's deep disagreements with Hōnen are referred to throughout this book, but see pp. 84–121 in particular). On the theme of dreams and dream diaries in Japanese Buddhism, see Faure 1996: Ch. 5 (Myōe is treated on pp. 124–6). Tanabe 1992: 82 describes Myōe's attack on Hōnen as 'personal, doctrinal, and uncharacteristically vicious'. As Tanabe points out, Hōnen's disparagement of visions cannot have endeared him to Myōe. Myōe, Tanabe says, was 'livid' because Hōnen's teaching of exclusive rebirth after death in the Pure Land effectively denies the possibility of the personal visionary relationship here and now with the living Buddha that was the very essence of Myōe's spirituality and life. The correctness of Myōe's attack on Hōnen was not surprisingly shown to him in visions and dreams (a later defender of Hōnen pointed out that the relative obscurity of Myōe's attack compared with the widespread popularity of Hōnen's work showed that the Buddhas did not really endorse Myōe's criticisms. One of Hōnen's biographers said that for his attack Myōe was reborn in hell; *ibid*.: 108–9, 111). For a specifically Shingon (Japanese esoteric or tantric school of Buddhism) way of understanding Amitābha and his Pure Land – very different from the Buddhism of Hōnen and Shinran – see the paper by Sanford, in Payne and Tanaka 2004: Ch. 4.
166. Cf. here Tanabe's discussion of the defence of Hōnen by the latter's disciple Benchō, and others (Tanabe 1992: 117–18). For Tanabe, it is simply true that Hōnen in the *Senchakushū* did reject the *bodhicitta*. This message was too radical for his disciples, including Shinran (*ibid*.: 120).
167. Andrews 1987a: 479. For the activities of Hōnen's more radical followers, the alleged secret love-affair, and the persecution of Hōnen and his disciples (their opponents referred to his disciples as 'devils' and 'enemies of the diffusion of Buddhism') see Rambelli, in Payne and Tanaka 2004: 171–7.
168. For a translation of an early hagiography of Hōnen, intended to make just this point, see Andrews, in Tanabe 1999: Ch. 35.
169. Matsunaga and Matsunaga 1974/6: II, 63–4. For a summary of the nine-point attack, and Hōnen's seven-point pledge, see the *Senchakushū* English Translation Project 1998: 15–18. See also Andrews 2004: 93–4, 97 ff. (particularly on how the seven-point pledge pragmatically modifies the *Senchakushū*). Point seven of the nine points concerns Hōnen's advocacy of exclusive *nenbutsu* recitation as the superior way, over against

visualization meditation. In later centuries there were several peasant rebellions associated with 'exclusive *nenbutsu*' practice, although these were directly related to the Pure Land tradition of Hōnen's disciple Shinran rather than that of Hōnen (Machida 1999: 7–9). Nevertheless, it was Hōnen who (no doubt unintentionally) provided the initial impetus for the development of such 'radical Amida cults' ('a sort of "theology of liberation"': Rambelli, following Hiroo Satō). See the article by Rambelli, in Payne and Tanaka 2004: Ch. 6: 177; on the seven-points, see pp. 173 ff. In these radical cults we also find a form of 'carnivalesque' (Rambelli) moral, and hence social, reversal, suggesting that (for those who truly understand) so-called 'evil' should be positively accepted and embraced. In some cults it was argued that the true practitioner – one who sees correctly, 'sees things the way they really are' – realizes that no strange religious experiences, no piety, indeed no *nenbutsu* is needed at all. One need do absolutely nothing, but is saved by Amitābha already and hence beyond all good and evil (*ibid.*: 178–9, 187). Others said that the true way to the Pure Land was for a man and a woman to recite the *nenbutsu* at the appropriate point during the nonduality of sexual intercourse (*ibid.*: 180 ff.; this may show the influence of the 'heretical' Tachikawa version of tantric Shingon).

170. In Burtt 1955: 214–15; see also Matsunaga and Matsunaga 1974/6: II, 69. For a Chinese parallel to the idea that if recitation of the Buddha's name can save sinners it can do even more for the learned and virtuous, see Lai, in Foard *et al.* 1996: 197. Cf. Shinran below, who deliberately reverses this.
171. Cf. a revelation that came to another important later Pure Land practitioner, the itinerant holy man (*hijiri*) Ippen (1239–89): '"Your long–accumulated merits are not merits, virtues not virtues." All dharmas of good and evil should be understood in terms of this [i.e. "Your long-accumulated demerits, evils, are not demerits either"]. Do not deliberate about before or after beyond Namu-amida-butsu here and now' (Hirota 1997: 115). One remains without worry in the *nenbutsu* of the present moment. All else springs from the virtues, the grace, of Amitābha. Cf. too the apparently antinomian 'one should behave as one wishes . . . in the easy practice there are no precepts: one should not be ashamed of impure acts such as having sex, drinking alcohol, eating meat or taking life . . . just behave as you like; prohibitions and impurities are not a problem', attributed to a certain Chōrenbō (Rambelli, in Payne and Tanaka 2004: 187).
172. Blum 2002: 31. Other Japanese, we are told, strove for a million *nenbutsu* a week (Shigematsu, in Foard *et al.* 1996: 300).
173. Burtt 1955: 215; Tanabe 1999: 278; Andrews 2004: 92 ff.
174. Bloom 1965: 21–2; cf. Andrews 2004: 94; Stone, in Payne and Tanaka 2004: 105. For disagreements among some of Hōnen's disciples on this theme, see Blum 2002: 26 ff. For some medieval Japanese discussions previous to Hōnen on the importance of deathbed recitation, appropriate deathbed ritual, various invocations for removing karmic hindrances, and deathbed signs, dreams and visions, see the article by Stone,

in Payne and Tanaka 2004: Ch. 3. The indignities and sufferings accompanying fatal illness meant that devotional accounts of a perfect death while reciting the *nenbutsu* may not always have been completely accurate (see, e.g., Yiengpruksawan, in Kapstein 2004: 247–8). The importance of the final deathbed recitation led in some Japanese cases (as we have seen already in China) to self-immolation at spiritually the most opportune moment for death, although not without occasional doctrinal opposition (Stone, in Payne and Tanaka 2004: 101–4). With time, in Japan, concern for postmortem welfare moved away from deathbed practices to appropriate funerals. Funerals do not require the dying to have mental ability at the time of death, and do not depend on signs, visions etc. for assurance of fortunate outcome. And as we shall see, for Shinran's interpretation of the Pure Land, the moment of death as such is unimportant in terms of whether or not someone will be saved.

175. Notwithstanding the suggestion that Shinran himself may have been a manifestation of Avalokiteśvara, according to another legend Avalokiteśvara (Kannon) manifested as Shinran's wife, Eshinni.
176. Shinran denied that he had any disciples. They were his fellow believers, his friends. See the Yui-en 1961: 12–13. To the present day the Jōdo Shin Shū is characterized by priests who may be married with families.
177. On the suggestion that the *Kyōgyōshinshō* is in part a reply to the criticisms of Hōnen by Myōe, see Tanabe 1992: 116–21. For a brief selection from Shinran, see Dobbins, in Tanabe 1999: Ch. 27.
178. Shinran appears to think of this as a logical impossibility, but he also seems to have denied free will, holding a rigidly deterministic view of karma (Hirota 1982: 32 ff.).
179. Ueda 1984b: 49. Ueda's two-part article is a useful exposition of Shinran's Buddhism and its orthodoxy in the light of wider Mahāyāna doctrine.
180. See Shigematsu, in Foard *et al.* 1996: 307, and Unno, *ibid.*: 328. Cf. the later attempts by Rennyo (1415–99) to construct a Jōdo Shin Shū ethics (Ingram 1976). For Shinran, to think that his teaching allows one to do evil actions with impunity is to miss the point. To go out of one's way to do evil is also to rely on Own Power, as if *one's own* actions are what it is all about. It is thus to block the flow of Amitābha's salvific Other Power. A person who still relies on Own Power and does evil will hence attain horrible karmic results rather than the Pure Land.
181. Japanese: *shinjin*. This term is usually translated as 'faith' or sometimes as 'trust' or (as previously) 'entrusting'. But it should be clear that neither of these translations really conveys what Shinran is trying to get at, particularly the way in which *shinjin* for Shinran is bound up with the very Buddhist idea of not-Self. In this context, where Shinran's own understanding of the notion is at stake, I shall use 'self-abandonment'.
182. See Jones 2000: 49 for the Chinese master Jixing Chewu on the importance of *gratitude* to the Buddha for his compassion, together with *shame* for previous misdeeds, *joy* at hearing the Dharma, and *sorrow* for the effects of one's karmic obscurations.

183. Hirota 1982: 40. *Jinen* for Shinran is the 'spontaneous working of the Vow', 'becoming completely free of calculation and design' (Shinran 1997, vol. 2: 191–2; see also Unno, in Foard *et al*. 1996: 330).
184. See Bloom 1965: 67, 77, and 79–80; cf. Hirota 1982: 41. Of course, such a teaching, whether true or false, suited very well a social situation where the ancestors could now be portrayed as Perfect Buddhas, no longer subject to rebirth, and remaining full of compassion to look after their descendants, among other sentient beings. The notion that the dead could and should be referred to as Buddhas developed relatively early in Japanese Buddhist history (Matsunaga and Matsunaga 1974/6: I, 253 ff.). It shows in a new guise the occasional discomfort felt in China and Japan when the pan-Indian doctrine of rebirth confronted indigenous cults of respect for ancestors.
185. The characters of Hōnen and Shinran themselves testify to this. On the *myōkōnin*, see Kawamura 1981a: 223 ff.

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Index of names

Adolphson, M. S. 347
Ajātaśatru 9, 242
Ajitasena 28
Akṣobhya 217, 231–4, 236, 363, 372–5
Alexander the Great 130
Altan Khan 191
Ames, W. L. 294
Amitābha (Amitāyus) 6, 28, 64, 132, 159, 165–6, 212–13, 220, 222, 234, 236, 238–44, 246–64, 292, 343, 348, 363, 365, 367–8, 374–87
Amoghasiddhi 234
Andrews, A. A. 259, 376, 382–6
Āryadeva 63, 65
Asaṅga 85–7, 90–2, 96, 99, 109–10, 114, 167, 179–80, 219, 244, 301, 305, 307, 311, 353, 379
Aśoka 9–10, 16, 42, 270, 277, 333
Aśokadattā 22–3
Aśvaghoṣa 110, 116
Atiśa 77, 79, 189, 194–5, 198, 200, 203, 226, 278, 298, 354–6, 358
Avalokiteśvara 57, 159, 221–7, 243, 247, 259, 287, 289, 340, 343, 358, 365–70, 372, 374, 387; appearance 222; iconography 221–2; statuary 223

Bailey, H. W. 28
Baker, I. A. 360
Bareau, A. 283
Barrett, T. H. 330–3, 335, 348, 369
Bary, W. T. de 137, 163, 335, 379–81
Basham, A. L. 9, 12, 47, 174, 219, 365
Bechert, H. 4, 10, 18, 22, 268–70, 364, 367–8
Benn, J. A. 160, 160–1, 332, 334, 336, 342–7, 374, 380, 382
Beyer, S. 58, 133, 195, 287, 355–6, 369
Bhadrapāla 25
Bhaiṣajyaguru 234–8; benefits of worshipping 236–7; Buddha Field 236; iconography 237; imagery 235; origins 235
Bhāvaviveka 66–7, 73, 82, 88, 286, 288–90, 294, 307–8, 352
Birch, C. 330
Birnbaum, R. 235
Bizot, F. 327
Blofeld, J. 224, 367–9
Bloom, A. 250, 259–64, 379–81, 386, 388
Blum, M. L. 246, 316, 373, 386
Bocking, B. 300
Bodhibhadra 133
Bodhidharma 119, 120
Bodhiruci 214, 376–7
Bodhisena 147
Bodiford, W. 324–5
Boerschmann, E. 223
Boquist, Å. 306
Boucher, D. 269–70, 273, 276–8, 330
Braarvig, J. 11, 37, 279–80, 283, 285, 291, 345, 359, 376
Brassard, F. 355
Brom ston (Drom Tern) 189
Brooks, A. P. 371
Broughton, J. 323

bSod nams rgya mtsho (Sir nam gya tso) 191, 196
Bu ston 193, 317, 355
Buddhaghosa 174, 210
Buddhapālita 66–7, 73, 82, 294
Buitenen, J. A. B. van 25
Burton, D. 295
Burtt, E. A. 256, 383, 386
Buswell, R. E., Jr 270, 283, 316, 320, 323, 326–7, 330, 332, 335, 342–3, 349, 351, 354–9, 367, 371

Cabezón, J. I. 293, 296–7, 348
Campany, R. F. 273, 332, 361, 366–7
Candra Gupta II 84
Candrakīrti: on absence of Self 53; on the conventional 78; Mādhyamika commentaries 66; on Nāgārjuna 63; on *prasaṅga* method 71
Candraprabha 236, 237
Carrithers, M. 361
Chan, Wing-tsit 83, 132
Chang, Garma, C. C. 23, 106, 139, 152, 227, 229, 232–4, 300, 316, 332, 335, 339, 349, 351, 361, 369–70, 372–4, 376–7
Chappell, D. W. 248, 320, 376, 379–81
Chen, J. 321, 330–5, 347, 369
Ch'en, K. 253, 316, 366, 368, 381
Chengguan (Cheng-kuan) 138
Chih-li 322
Chi-tsang 82–3, 162, 297, 300–1, 318, 337
Chih Ch'ien 81
Chih-i 18
Chih-tun 246
Chih-yen 138
Ch'ing-mu 81
Chinul 144
Cholvijarn, P. 125–7, 327–9
Chu-hung 253, 346, 380
Chuang-tzu 83
Chün-fang Yü 368–9
Cimin (Tz'u-min) 253
Cleary, T. 134, 138, 143, 205–7, 331–2, 335, 348, 358–60, 364, 368
Collins, S. 14, 345
Cone, M. 291, 359
Conze, E. 31, 47–9, 51–4, 56–7, 59, 61, 85, 210, 218, 278, 283–5, 290–1, 361, 369, 378
Cook, F. H. 98, 100, 121–2, 142, 208, 309–10, 331, 335, 353, 359
Corless, R. J. 214, 292, 379–80
Cousins, L. 18, 19, 269–71, 273, 285, 352
Cozort, D. 354, 373
Crosby, K. 327, 355

D'Amato, G. 310
Dantinne, J. 232–3, 372
Daoan (Tao-an) 220
Daochuo (Tao-ch'o) 248–50
Daoming (Tao-ming) 230
Daoxuan (Tao-hsüan) 248
Dargyay, L. 297, 356
Davidson, R. M. 276, 280, 363
Dayal, H. 202, 204, 358–9
Deegalle, M. 269
Deleanu, F. 278, 280, 283, 290–1
Demiéville, P. 6, 99, 167, 219, 300, 310, 321, 339–40, 347–8, 355, 361, 365, 374
Devadatta 159
dGe 'dun grub (Gen dun drup) 190
dGe 'dun rgya mtsho (Gen dun gya tso) 191
Dhammapiṭaka, Phra 126
Dhargyey, N. 183, 201, 354, 356, 358
Dharmagupta 15
Dharmākara 240, 241
Dharmakīrti 88, 302, 309, 312
Dharmapāla 88, 98–100, 294, 307–8, 310–12
Dharmarakṣa 150, 278
Dharmodgata 58
Dignāga 88
dKon mchog 'jigs med dbang po (Kern chok jik may wong bo) 92
Dobbins, J. C. 348, 387
Dōgen 47, 119–22, 165, 207
dPal gyi rdo rje (Belgyi Dorjay) 164–5
Dragonetti, C. 352
Dreyfus, G. 293–4, 298, 302, 312, 322, 357
Ducor, J. 363, 374–7, 381

Dumoulin, H. 171
Dunne, J. D. 302
Durt, H. 277, 345
Dushun (Tu-shun) 38, 138–9, 143, 145, 332
Dutt, N. 14, 15, 27, 352
Dykstra, Y. K. 149, 152, 159, 161, 336, 342–3

Eckel, M. D. 290, 294, 352, 376, 378
Eliot, C. 163, 256–7, 323, 384
Ensink, J. 31, 277, 281

Faure, B. 270, 332, 385
Faxian (Fa-hsien) 4
Fazang (Fa-tsang) 103, 109, 129, 138, 139, 140; *Golden Lion* treatise 141–4; ontological perspective 142–3; self-immolation 161
Fazhao (Fa-chao) 252, 370, 381–2
Flood, G. 342
Foard, J. 259, 262–5, 323, 365, 378, 380, 383–4, 386–8
Forman, R. K. C. 312
Frauwallner, E. 87, 101, 301, 310, 314
Friedmann, D. L. 307
Fujita, K. 215, 336, 341, 343, 363, 375–9
Fung Yu-lan 83, 301
Fussman, G. 375

Gauḍapāda 109, 317
Gaulier, S. 220, 241, 335, 365, 369, 372
Gellner, D. 222–3, 282, 367, 369–70
Gethin, R. 201, 267, 280, 291, 296, 340, 345, 348, 358, 360, 363
Gimello, R. M. 139, 208, 335, 357, 369
Godan Khan 190
Gokhale, V. V. 352
Gombrich, R. 7, 9, 22–4, 269–70, 272, 274, 326, 359, 364, 367–8
Gómez, L. 39, 133–4, 136, 193–4, 294, 316, 331, 355, 363, 376–7, 379
Gotama (Buddha) 209, *see also* Siddhārtha Gautama
Gregory, P. N. 117, 130, 143, 145, 324–7, 332, 335, 339
Griffiths, P. J. 93–4, 97, 101–2, 291, 299, 305–9, 311–13, 320, 353
Groner, P. 347, 357
Grosnick, W. 111, 116, 311, 314–15, 317, 321–2
Guanyin (Kuan-yin) 224
Guenther, H. V. 92, 356
Gushri Khan 191
Gyaltsen, Kensur Pema 58–9, 288
Gyamtso, Khenpo Tsultrim 304
Gyatso, Geshe Kelsang 355
Gyatso, K. 354
Gyatso, S. 197, 356
Gyatso, T. 196, 198, 358
Gyōgi 147

Habito, R. L. F. 348
Hakamaya, N. 122–3, 124, 301, 319, 324–6
Hakeda, Y. S. 116–17, 321, 331
Hakuin 383
Hall, B. C. 52, 70, 92, 94, 141, 169, 210, 225, 298, 304, 326, 349, 362
Han Yu 131
Hara, M. 314
Haribhadra 55, 67–8
Harrison, Paul 17, 20–1, 25, 27, 30, 36, 40–1, 48, 89, 176–7, 210–13, 227, 252–3, 270–1, 274, 276, 278–81, 283–4, 287, 330, 336, 352, 360–1, 363, 366, 369–70, 372, 374–5, 377
Harvey, P. 339, 348–9, 371
Hattori, M. 97, 100, 307, 311–12
Hayes, R. P. 295
Hesse, H. 173
Hevia, J. 334, 370
Hikata, R. 48, 335
Hirabayashi, J. 305–7
Hirakawa, A. 22–3, 272, 292, 325
Hirota, D. 260–1, 264, 381, 383–4, 386–8
Hoffmann, H. 187
Hōgon 149
Honda, M. 205–7, 358–60
Hōnen 254–9; early life 254; principal works 255–6; studies 255
Hookham, S. 297, 319

Hopkins, J. 68–9, 71–2, 79, 92, 113, 199, 201, 204, 286, 294, 297, 300, 305, 311, 319, 354–5
Hori, I. 364, 381
Hoshino, E. 371
Houston, G. W. 191–2, 355
Hsien-tsung, Emperor of China 131, 330–1, 363
Hsü-yun 228
Hsüan-tsang 4, 44, 84, 88, 98–100, 132, 219, 235, 249, 284, 302, 309–11, 353
Hua, H. 230, 371
Hubbard, J. 320, 324–7, 338, 341–2, 348, 350
Huiyuan (Hui-yüan) 12–14, 243–4
Hurvitz, L. 46, 81, 150, 153–5, 157–60, 162, 216, 336
Huviṣka 11
Hyde-Chambers, F. 225
Hyegwan 82

Iida, S. 294, 305–7
Ikeda, D. 170
Inagaki, H. 242–3, 376–7
Ingram, P. O. 382–3, 387

Jaini, P. S. 49, 301, 363–4
Jenkins, S. L. 60, 278, 288–91
Jizang (Chi-tsang) 82–3, 162, 297, 300–1, 318, 337
Jones, C. B. 254, 363, 374, 379–82, 387
Jong, J. W. de 112, 277, 282, 311, 314, 317–18, 321, 330
Jorgensen, J. 323
Joshi, L. M. 58, 160

Kajiyama, Y. 176–7, 286, 310–11, 352
Kalsang, T. 370
Kamalaśīla 67, 191–4, 194–5, 197, 200–1, 203, 294, 356, 358
Kambala 87–8, 90–1, 94, 97, 304, 312
Kammu, Emperor of Japan 163
Kaneko, D. 250
Kaniṣka 11, 16
Kannon 224
Kapstein, M. 190, 319, 348, 354–5, 378, 387
Karashima, S. 37, 279, 316, 336
Kawamura, L. 356, 388
Keenan, J. P. 314, 320, 379
Keown, D. 339, 371
Khri lde gtsug brtan (Tri day tsuk ten) 5
Khri srong lde'u brtsan (Tri song day tsen) 188, 191, 192
Kieschnick, John 214, 270, 288, 330, 332, 336, 339, 342, 344–6, 367–70
King, R. 317, 321
King, S. B. 324
Kinnard, J. N. 374
Kiyota, M. 97, 246, 311, 379
Kleine, C. 347
Kōdate, N. 372–3
Kritzer, R. 302
Kṣitigarbha 229–31
Kuan-yin 224
Kublai Khan 167, 190, 354
Kuijp, L. W. J. van der 319
Kūkai (Kōbō Daishi) 219
Kumārajīva 81–2, 132, 150, 212–13, 239, 269, 292, 300, 336
Kurata, B. 336
Kvaerne, P. 187, 354

Läänemets, M. 367–8
LaFleur, W. 156, 348, 371
Lai, W. 81, 119, 141, 290, 302, 311, 314, 316–18, 324, 330, 365, 378, 380, 386
Laird, T. 360
Lamotte, É. 1, 8, 10, 12, 19, 21, 47, 86, 89–91, 97–8, 215, 228, 271, 281, 286, 300, 316, 343, 362–3, 369–70, 377
Lancaster, L. 29, 177, 364
Langer, R. 310
Laozi (Lao-tzu) 131
Lethcoe, N. 59
Lewis, T. T. 281–2, 320, 366–7, 369
Li Tongxuan (Li T'ung-hsüan) 144, 208
Liebenthal, W. 116, 214
Lindtner, C. 88, 90–1, 94, 276, 293, 296, 298, 302, 304, 308, 312
Liu, Ming-Wood 108, 316–17

Locke, J. K. 277–8, 282, 366
Lokakṣema 30, 132, 212, 227
Lopez, D. S. 276, 280, 286, 294–5, 297, 315–16, 320, 326, 333, 347–8, 354–5, 362–3, 367–70, 375–6, 379, 381–2
Lusthaus, D. 302–4, 306

Mabbett, I. 292
McBride, R. D. 282
McClintock, S. 293–4, 298
McFarlane, S. 334, 349
Machida, S. 256, 350, 383–4, 386
McNair, A. 335
MacQueen, G. 38–9, 41–2, 280
McRae, J. 288
Magee, W. 314, 316, 318–19, 321
Mahākāśyapa 12, 119, 271, 365–6
Mahāvairocana (Vairocana) 134–5, 146–8
Mahāyāna (Chinese monk), debates with Kamalaśīla 191–4
Maitreya 48, 85–7, 92–3, 96–7, 109–10, 114, 137, 140, 157, 179–80, 183, 218–21, 229, 234, 238, 245, 247, 263, 269, 276, 279, 288, 306–7, 311, 333, 353, 360–1, 363–9, 372, 377, 381
Maitreyanātha 87, 92–3
Makransky, J. 60, 288–90, 351–2, 354
Mallmann, M.-T. de 367
Mañjuśrī 148, 159, 172, 188, 221, 226–9, 227–30, 363, 368–70
Mar pa 189, 354
Masao, A. 121–2, 324
Mathes, K.-D. 306
Matilal, B. K. 302
Matsumoto, S. 122–4, 214, 248, 314, 324–5
Matsunaga, D. and A. 255, 348, 380, 384–6, 388
Mi bskyod rdo rje (Mi kyer dor jay) 70
Mi la ras pa 189
Mi pham 92, 293
Milinda (Menandros) 130
Mithras 220
mKhas grub rje (Kaydrup Jay) 114, 319, 354
Moerman, D. Max 343, 368, 381
Montgomery, D. B. 350
Mori, S. 268–9, 366
Myōe 257, 281, 362

Nagao, G. 181, 185, 305–6, 353
Nāgārjuna 24, 26; and Āryadeva 63–5; on bodies of the Buddha 177–9; Candrakīrti on 63; Chinese perspective 142–3; chronology 84; on emptiness 76, 178; hymns 178; life 63–4; on nirvāṇa and saṃsāra 76; as Pure Land patriarch 244–5; replies to accusations 76–7; on the Self 74; thesis denial 71–2; works 64–5
Nakamura, H. 109, 121, 269, 284, 336, 374, 376
Nandimitra 28, 29
Napper, E. 295, 300
Naquin, S. 368–9
Nāropa 188
Nattier, J. 3, 5–6, 10, 35, 46, 48, 232, 245–6, 269–73, 276–9, 281, 284–7, 292, 331, 336–7, 341, 348, 355–9, 362, 364–5, 367, 372–5, 377–8
Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho (Nga wang lo zang gya tso) 191
Nichiren 149, 164, 256–7; followers' martyrdom 167–70; and *Lotus Sūtra* 165–7; persecution 169
Nishiyama, K. 120, 324
Niwano, N. 170, 171
Norman, K. R. 271, 287, 360

Oda, N. 163
Ohnuma, R. 345
Okazaki, J. 372, 378, 381
Oort, H. A. van 223, 229

Padmasambhava 188
Pagel, U. 272, 278, 284, 337, 339, 355–6, 358–60
Paramārtha 19–20, 99, 103, 116, 132, 302, 306, 310–12, 321, 324
Park, S. B. 321–2
Pas, J. F. 130, 242, 250, 252, 378–81
Pasadika, Bhikkhu 370
Paul, D. M. 316, 333

Paul, D. Y. 136, 310, 343, 368
Paul VI, Pope 170
Payne, R. K. 246, 379
Payutto, P. A. (Phra Dhammapiṭaka) 126
Petzold, B. 167, 169, 348, 351
'Phags pa (Pak pa) 190, 227
Phuntsho, K. 297
Piṅgiya 209
Pommaret, F. 375
Potter, K. 293, 302
Poussin, L. de la Vallée 186, 352, 354
Prabhūtaratna 156–7, 168
Prajñākaramati 178
Puan (P'u-an) 39, 139, 145, 332
Purāṇa 8
Pye, M. 336, 341

Qingmu (Ch'ing-mu) 81

Rabten, Geshe 356
Rahula, W. 270
Rajyanvisith, Phra 127
Ral pa can (Rel pa chen) 188–9
Ratnasambhava 234
Ray, R. 30, 275–6
Reader, I. 340, 342, 348
Renzō 149
Rideout, J. K. 330
Robinson, R. H. 292, 295
Rowell, T. 215, 218, 363
Ruegg, D. S. 7, 108–9, 269, 294, 296, 310, 315–19, 322, 385
Ryōgen 163

Sa skya Paṇḍita 188, 190
Sadāparibhūta 36, 154, 169, 341
Sadāprarudita 58
Saddhatissa, H. 209, 360
Saichō 162, 163
Śākyamuni Buddha 6, 11, 20, 26, 33, 58, 60, 162, 168–70, 180, 188, 203, 229–30, 234, 247, 251, 256–8, 270, 272, 276–7, 292, 326, 331, 342–3, 345, 348, 354, 366–9, 374, 377, 381; abandons flock 216; Buddha Field 215, 217; as historical character 134–5, 168, 173–4; jātaka tales 245; in *Lotus Sūtra* 150–1; and Mañjuśrī 228; teachings 242–3
Samantabhadra (Fugen) 137–8, 148, 229, 343, 347, 368, 370
Samuels, J. 279
Sangharakshita 332
Saṅghavarman 239–40, 376, 380
Sangpo, K. 288
Sansom, G. 163
Śāntideva 41, 66, 198, 199
Sāramati 109
Śāriputra 15, 52, 153–4, 159–60, 181, 217
Sasaki, S. 4, 272–3, 316–17
Schmithausen, L. 87, 89, 100, 282, 301–4, 306, 308–10, 312, 318, 332
Schopen, G. 6, 7, 23–4, 29, 31, 34–5, 38, 48, 203, 267, 269, 272–80, 282, 285, 342, 359, 366, 375
Seeger, M. 327–9
Sen, T. 284, 331–3, 364, 369–70
Sengzhao (Seng-chao) 82
sGam po pa 202, 204–5, 207
Shandao (Shan-tao) 49–50, 247, 249–56, 251, 252, 380–3
Sharf, R. H. 304, 323, 334, 357, 365
Shaw, M. 322
Shimoda, M. 272–3, 316–17
Shinran 165, 243–4, 253–4, 273, 343, 347, 360, 378–9, 381, 385–8; on karma 261–2; life 259–60; marriage 259–60; on Own/Other Power 260–1; principal works 260; Pure Land teaching 265–6; on rebirth 263; self-abandonment 262–5
Shirakawa, Emperor of Japan 163
Shōjun, B. 257
Shōmu, Emperor of Japan 140, 147
Shōtoku, Taishi, Japanese prince 119
Shunzei 156
Siddhārtha Gautama 151, 154, 173–5, 181, 183, 245
Siderits, M. 298
Silk, J. A. 3, 4, 6, 267, 272, 276, 277, 279, 294, 302

Śiva 222
Skilling, P. 267, 285
Sperling, E. 348
Sponberg, A. 360–1, 363–6
Srong btsan sgam po (Song tsen gam po), Emperor of Tibet 187
Stearns, C. 297, 319
Stein, R. 368
Steinkellner, E. 302
Stevenson, D. B. 336, 342, 344, 350, 362–3, 376, 379, 381–2
Sthiramati 88, 93, 96–7, 99, 100, 199, 294, 307, 311
Stock, B. 281
Stone, J. I. 256, 321, 324–6, 342, 348, 350–1, 383–4, 386–7
Strong, J. S. 270, 275, 280, 352
Studholme, A. 287, 367–8
Subhūti 52, 285
Sūryagupta 226
Sūryaprabha 236, 237
Suzuki, D. T. 120, 135–6, 199, 223, 248, 253, 323, 332, 349, 366, 384
Swanson, P. L. 282, 301, 314, 316, 322–6, 347

Takasaki, J. 103–4, 110–12, 124, 311, 314–15, 317–18, 321, 326, 341
Takeda, D. 371
Takemi, M. 372
Tamura, Y. 336
Tanabe, G. J. Jr 133–4, 257, 275, 281, 334–6, 343, 347–8, 350, 362, 365, 367, 371, 381, 384–7
Tanaka, Kenneth K. 238
Tanluan (T'an-luan) 214, 243, 247–8
Tao-an 220
Tao-ch'o 247, 248–50
Tao-ming 230
Tao-sheng 107
Tārā 160, 225–8, 369
Tāranātha 225
Tatz, M. 291
Tay, C. N. 224, 336
Teiser, S. F. 230–1, 361, 370–1
Tenzin, L. 362
Tetsurō, W. 256
Thomas, E. J. 222–3, 352, 367
Thurman, R. A. F. 86, 91, 93, 113, 217–18, 286, 290, 305, 356
Tokuno, K. 283
Tola, F. 352
Tsong kha pa 54, 55, 67, 68, 71; on aspects of the path 196; on Nāgārjuna's thesis denial 71; Prāsaṅgika interpretation 72; on *tathāgatagarbha* 113; on texts of definitive meaning 86; on third *bhūmi* 204
Tsukamoto, Z. 210, 213, 220, 361–3, 379
Tsung-mi 38, 138–9, 143, 325, 335
Tu-shun 38, 138–9, 143, 145, 332
Tucci, G. 178, 352, 354–5
Tuck, A. P. 299
Tz'u-min 253

Ueda, Y. 261–2, 311, 387
Umada, G. 169
Upāli 15
Urban, H. B. 93, 101, 305–7, 313

Vaidehī 242–3
Vaidya, P. L. 71
Vairocana (Mahāvairocana) 134–5, 137, 146–8, 162, 234, 321, 331, 370, 375, 381
Vasubandhu 85, 87–8, 90, 93–7, 99, 116, 244, 246–7, 269, 301–2, 307–8, 310–12, 317, 378
Vetter, T. 24, 272–3
Victoria, B. 349
Vimalakīrti 83, 227, 339
Viśiṣṭacāritra 169
Vohārikatissa 5, 268, 277

Waldron, W. S. 97–9, 308, 310
Walleser, M. 300
Walser, J. 4, 6, 11, 23, 267–8, 271–2, 275, 283–5, 291–2, 295, 299, 301
Wang Bi (Wang Pi) 81
Wangchuk, D. 356
Wangyal, Geshe 356
Warder, A. K. 271

Wayman, A. and H. 106–7, 269, 286, 294, 310, 316
Weinstein, S. 213, 247, 333, 379–81
Welch, H. 161, 230, 253, 340, 345, 347–9, 370, 385
Wilhelm, R. 117
Williams, P. 3, 4, 17, 50, 69, 70, 74–7, 97, 100, 141, 267, 271, 280, 282, 286, 293–4, 296, 299–301, 311, 313, 319, 345, 366, 375
Willis, J. D. 91, 305
Willson, M. 225–6, 369
Wilson, J. 136, 297
Wu Zetian (Wu Tse-t'ien), Empress of China 139–40, 141

Xianzong (Hsien-tsung), Emperor of China 131, 330–1, 363
Xing, Guang 269, 331, 339–40, 351–3, 366, 375
Xuanzang (Hsüan-tsang) 44, 84, 88, 98–100, 132, 219, 235, 249, 284, 302, 309–11, 353
Xuyun (Hsü-yun) 228

Yamada, I. 217, 374
Yanshou (Yen-shou) 161, 253
Yü, Chün-fang 368–9
Yu, X. 340
Yui-en 255, 260–1, 264, 387

Zenran 260
Zhi Qian (Chih Ch'ien) 81
Zhidun (Chih-tun) 246
Zhili (Chih-li) 322
Zhiyan (Chih-yen) 138
Zhiyi (Chih-i) 118, 162, 168, 322–3
Zhuangzi (Chuang-tzu) 83
Zhuhong (Chu-hung) 253, 346, 380
Zimmermann, M. 104, 108, 274, 293, 314–19, 321, 327, 341–2, 349
Ziporyn, B. 118, 322, 347
Zongmi (Tsung-mi) 138–9, 143, 325, 335
Zürcher, E. 213–14, 220, 247, 330, 361–2, 364
Zwalf, W. 222, 229, 237, 366–8

Index of subjects

Abhidharma (absence of Self teaching) 8, 14–18, 15–18, 49, 50, 52–4, 53, 69, 87, 175
Abhidharmakośa (Vasubandhu) 87
Abhirati 28, 232–4
Abhisamayālaṃkāra 48, 66, 68, 87, 182
Abhisamayālaṃkārālokā (Haribhadra) 68
abortion 231, 371–2
Absolute Reality 70, 116, 122
Adhyardhaśatikā Prajñāpāramitā 48
Advaita Vedānta 85, 109
Ajaṇṭā cave monasteries 282
Ajitasena Sūtra 25, 27–30; key figures 28; origins 27–8; world view 29
Akṣayamatinirdeśa Sūtra 86
Akṣobhyavyūha Sūtra 48, 231–2
ālayavijñāna (substratum consciousness) 97–100, 103, 308, 309, 329
Ālokamālā 88
Amitāyurbuddhānusmṛti Sūtra 239, 242, 250, 251
An Lushan rebellion 252
analysis, relative to meditation 79
Aṅgulimālīya Sūtra 227
apratiṣṭhita (non-abiding) nirvāṇa 60, 185
Arhatship 13, 17, 18–20, 22, 26, 29, 31, 32, 36, 54, 98, 153–6, 196
art: Amitābha 241, 247; Avalokiteśvara 221–2; Bhaiṣajyaguru 237; Kṣitigarbha 229, 231; Maitreya 220–1; Mañjuśrī 229; Tārā 226; Vairocana 146–8, *see also* iconography
Āryasvapnanirdeśa Sūtra 41
asceticism, radical 31
Aśokadattāvyākaraṇa Sūtra 22
Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā 29, 38, 47–9, 51, 58, 75, 85, 176–8, 231
Aṣṭasāhasrikā Sūtra 29, 31, 38, 47, 54, 58, 61; on the bodies of the Buddha 176–7; *dharmakāya* in 177; on stūpa worship 176–7; turning of the wheel of Dharma 85
asterisk, in text titles 269
atoms, existence of 95
Avadānas 276
Avataṃsaka Sūtra 46, 129; Buddha in 134–5; in Chinese laity 145; Chinese translation 133; Empress Wu's interest 140; geographical origins 133; on gnosis 105; structure 132; and Vairocana in Buddhist art 146–8; visionary perspective 133–4
Awakening of Faith (Dasheng qixinlun) 110, 116, 117, 119, 121, 129, 140, 142, 143, 157

Bailun (Āryadeva) 81, 355
Bhadramāyākāravyākaraṇa Sūtra 22
Bhāvanākrama (Kamalaśīla) 67, 194, 197, 200
bhūmi (10 stages to enlightenment) 81, 192, 200–2, 204–5, 207
bKa' brgyud (Ka gyer) school 115, 188–91
Bodhicaryāvatāra (Śāntideva) 66, 195, 196, 198
Bodhicitta 194–202, 205, 225, 227, 228, 293, 355–7, 385; compassion and the 194–200; in the Pure Land tradition 241, 243, 257, 258, 265, 385
Bodhipathapradīpa (Atiśa) 189, 194–5, 197
bodhisattva, etymology 286–7
Bodhisattvabhūmi 200, 202

Bodhisattvagocaropāyaviṣayavikurvaṇanirdeśa Sūtra 274
bodhisattvapiṭaka 272
Bodhisattvas: Fazang's teaching 144–5; meditative cognizance 61–2; postponement of enlightenment 58–62; purifying deeds 215–16; stages, paths and perfections 200–8
bodies of the Buddha: in dGe lugs tradition 182–4; and emptiness 176–9; Nāgārjuna on 177–9; in Yogācāra tradition 179–82
Borobudur 146
Brahmanism 10–12, 24, 25, 58, 70, 85, 106, 109, 167, 174, 209, 223, 238
bSam yas (Samyay) monastery 188, 192
Buddha: bodies *see* bodies of the Buddha; characteristics 20, 172–3, 175; compassion 2, 6, 21, 27, 113, 151, 177, 179–82, 215, 217–18, 243, 249, 254; Dharma-body 175; eternality 157–8, 162, 186; as historical character 134–5, 168, 173–4; lifespan 185–6; principal function of a 215; skill-in-means 151–3; supramundane tradition of birth and life 21; three dimensions 173, 174
Buddha Fields (*buddhakṣetra*) 28, 39, 212, 214–18, 228, 229, 232, 234, 235, 238, 240
Buddhabhūmi Śāstra 186
Buddhahood: attaining 102, 113, 185, 196–7, 207–8, 261; causes 114, 178
buddhānusmṛti (recollection of the Buddha) 209, 211, 251
Buddhism: archaeological evidence 9–10; chronology 9–10
burning house parable 155

Caodong (Ts'ao-tung) Chan *see* Chan
Catuḥśatakakārikā (Āryadeva) 65, 81
Catuḥstava (Nāgārjuna) 178
causation 70, 73–4
Chan: chronology 119–20; criticisms 253; etymology 119; meditation 50, 139; recitation 253–4, *see also* Zen
Chengweishilun (Xuanzang) 88, 98, 100, 302–3, 309, 312
China: female deities 223–4; history of Buddhism in 129–32; Mādhyamika in 81–3; Maitreya worship 219, 220–1; patriarchs 138–9; persecution 248; Pure Land patriarchs 247; Pure Land tradition 243–54; sacred mountains 223, 229; search for longevity 214; Sūtra translations 46–7; Tiantai school 118, *see also* Huayan
Ch'ing dynasty 81, 253
Chung lun (Madhyamaka Śāstra) 81
compassion: Avalokiteśvara 221, 223–4; and the Bodhicitta 194–200; of the Bodhisattva 54, 57–61, 102, 152, 185, 203, 205–6, 217, 230; of the Buddha 2, 6, 21, 27, 113, 151, 177, 179–82, 215, 217–18, 243, 249, 254; in jātaka tales 27, 37; and justification of killing 167; Mahāyāna emphasis on 186, 194; and skill-in-means 155, 189; Tārā's 225
conceptualized/constructed nature 90–2, 96, 100, 305
conditioned constituents 16–17
consciousness: existence of 95–6; levels of 97–100; and nonexistence 93–4; transformations of 100–1; Vasubandhu's arguments 94–5
conventional truth 76–7, 82, 183–4, 249
councils: First (Rājagṛha) 8, 12, 39; Second (Vaiśālī) 18
crimes, five great 241
Critical Buddhism movement 122–5

daimoku 168
Dalai Lama: Avalokiteśvara's appearance as 221; *dharmakāya* teachings 182; political position 191; and reincarnation 190; tradition of the 113; and violence 164
Dao (Tao) 50, 141, 220
Daoism (Taoism) 50, 83, 120, 131, 132, 141, 214
Daśabhūmika Sūtra 132, 133, 200, 202, 205, 206, 244
Daśacakrakṣitigarbha Sūtra 229
Dasheng qixinlun (Ta-ch'eng ch'i-hsin lun) 110, 115–17, 119, 121, 129, 140, 142, 143, 157

Dazhidulun (Ta-chih-tu Lun) 6, 51, 65, 81, 186
deities: Chinese female 223; visits by 40–1
dependent nature 90–4, 96, 97, 99, 100, 305–7
dependent origination 77
dGe lugs (Geluk) school 65, 68, 79; bodies of the Buddha 182–4; ethos 190; founding 112–13
Dhammakāya meditation techniques 126
Dharma: the Buddha on 42; as medicine 1–2; Turning of the Wheel of 85
Dharmacakrapravartana Sūtra 85
Dharmadharmatāvibhāga 87
dharmadhātu (Dharma-realm) 96, 135–7, 139, 143, 144, 180, 183
Dharmadhātustava (Nāgārjuna) 75, 114
Dharmaguptaka teachings 6
dharmakāya: concept analysis 106–7; contrast with the Buddha's physical form 176; in Mādhyamika theory 178–9; and the *tathāgatagarbha* 110–11, 113; three dimensions 177
dharmakāya, *see also* bodies of the Buddha
dharmas 16, 17, 40, 49–55, 57, 63, 68–71, 73, 79, 85, 87, 90, 94, 100, 106, 133, 135, 150, 153, 175–7, 179, 193, 201, 204, 205, 207, 271, 277, 285, 286, 294–7, 305, 337, 353, 386
Diamond Slivers 73
Diamond Sūtra 56, *see also Vajracchedikā*
divinity 121, 174, 187
divinization 174
doctrinal appraisal, criteria for 13–14
doctrinal diversity, and moral unity 1–7
doctrine, Tibetan saying about 1
dream simile, Mādhyamika/Yogācāra distinction 307
dreams: and perception of objects 95; revelatory significance of 40–1, *see also* visionary experiences
Dunhuang (Tun-huang) 129, 193, 221–3, 229, 230, 237, 320, 333, 381

East Asia: *Dasheng qixinlun* and the *Tathāgatagarbha* 115–19; Mādhyamika in 81–3; self-immolation in 160–1; stress on repeating the Buddha's name 252–3; Vinaya texts 5
East Asian Buddhism: features 129; Kṣitigarbha's importance 229–31; miracles in 139; patriarch phenomenon 138–9
Ekottarāgama 26–7, 211
Emei (Omei) Shan 229
emptiness: and the bodies of the Buddha 176–9; Buddha's teaching 86; of *dharmas* 17; five defects 111–12; and intrinsic existence 68–71; meditation and 79–81; Nāgārjuna on 76, 178; and nonexistence 93; perfected nature as 91; in Perfection of Wisdom texts 53–4, 61; real meaning of 111–12; in Tathāgatagarbha 112–13
Endere inscription 11
Enjoyment Body 180–6
enlightenment: 37 elements 204–5; attaining 173; Bodhisattvas' postponement of 58–62; Mahāyāna/Kamalaśīla debate 191–4; stages, paths and perfections 200–8; sudden 263
Essence Body 113, 114
essentialist fallacy 2–3
existence, intrinsic 68–71
existence/nonexistence, Nāgārjuna on 75–6
existential relaxation 54

faith 12, 17, 49, 86, 107, 110, 115–17, 119, 121, 123, 124, 127, 129, 142–5, 149, 157–9, 165, 167, 168, 171, 178, 187, 189, 201, 208, 210, 220, 243, 246, 247, 250, 261, 263
Fanwang Jing (Brahmā's Net Sūtra) 268
Faxiang (Fa-hsiang) school 88
female Bodhisattvas 223–4, 225–6
filial piety 161, 230
Final Days 245–6, 252
First Council 8, 12, 39
five great crimes 241
Five Points of Mahādeva 18–20
Flower Garland tradition *see* Huayan
foreigners, acceptance into Buddhism 11
forest hermits 36–8
form, with/without debate 101
four great arguments 13

Four Noble Truths 5, 85, 201, 205
four reliances 13–14
Foxinglun (Fo-hsing lun) 116

Gaṇḍavyūha Sūtra 132, 133, 135–8, 146, 210
garbha, meaning 104
giving, essence of 202
gnosis 96; types of 102
Golden Lion treatise (Fazang) 141–4
good works 21, 233, 257, 259
Gupta empire 84, 85, 109, 224
gzhan stong 112, 114, 115, 119, 121, 124
gzhan stong/rang stong dispute 112–15

hallucination 52, 70, 94, 210
Hearers (*śrāvakas*) 22, 29
heaven (*svarga*) 216, 257
hell: Avalokiteśvara's deeds 222; guardians' existence 95; Kṣitigarbha's deeds 230
hermits: forest 37–8; relationship to village monks 37
hidden treasures 280
Hīnayāna (the Inferior Vehicle) 23, 268
Hinduism 1, 57, 70, 84–5, 106, 109, 115, 207, 222–3
Histoire du Bouddhisme indien (Lamotte) 1
Hokkegenki tales 149, 152, 159, 161
honzon 168, 169
Huainanzi (*Huai-nan-tzu*) 117–18
Huayan: arrival in China 129–32; arrival in Japan 147–8; *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* 132–8; *dharmadhātu* in 135, 139, 144; and Empress Wu 139–40; Fazang's *Golden Lion* treatise 141–4; noumenon 141–5; Sudden Teaching 144–5
Huviṣka fragment 11

I-tsing 5, 132
iconography 6, 7, 45, 225, 229, 231, *see also* art
idealism, dynamic 94
imagination of the nonexistent 93
immaculate consciousness 99
incarnate lamas 190
India: *dharmakāya* in 176; divinity in ancient 174; evolution of Pure Land tradition 238–9; foreign invasions 11–12; *kṣatriya* (warrior) philosophy tradition 25; Mādhyamika tradition 65–8; Mahāyāna's background in 7–12; monastic teaching 84–5; a monk's life in 34; proponents of religious change 24; Vinaya rules 4
inherent/intrinsic existence 67–71, 75
insight meditation 79–81, 95–6
interpenetration 136, 140, 143, 144, 162
irreversibility, signs of 289–90

Japan 140; Bhaiṣajyaguru 237; female deities 224; Huayan's arrival 147–8; iconography 241; Kṣitigarbha's function 231; *Lotus Sūtra* 149, 165; Mādhyamika's introduction 82; Maitreya-inspired movements 219; *mappō* era 165–7; Pure Land tradition 159, 243–4, 254; Tiantai tradition 162
Jātaka tales 11, 20, 27, 245, 272, 281
jñāna (awareness) 96
Jo nang pa school 114, 115
Jōdo Shū (Pure Land sect) 247, 259, 260, 262, 264–6

kaidan 168, 169
Kamakura period 165
Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra 57, 222
karma 203, 213, 258
Karma pa 189–90
karmic seeds 97–8
Karuṇāpuṇḍarīka Sūtra 217
Kashmir 129, 211, 212, 213, 219–20, 242
Kāśyapaparivarta Sūtra 46
Kathāvatthu (Theravādin text) 20
kāya (body) 174
killing, permissibility 164–5, 167
Kōmeitō (Clean Government Party) 170
kṣatriya (warrior) tradition 25
Kuṣāṇas 10–11
Kyōgyōshinshō (Shinran) 260, 265

laity, as alleged origin of Mahāyāna 21–7
Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra 103, 289
Last Days theory (*mappō*) 254
Laughing Buddha 220
Lengyanjing (Leng-yen Ching) 47
Lhasa 187
Lokānuvartanā Sūtra (Pūrvaśaila text) 20
lokottara (supramundane) teaching 15–16, 17, 18, 20–1, 96, 126, 175, 178, 215, 217, 238–9
Lokottaravāda 18–21
longevity, search for 214
Lotus Sūtra 105; ability to save the wicked 159–60; body-burning 160–1; earliest extant Chinese translation 150; eternal Buddha 157–8, 162; Japanese perspective 149; and Japanese Pure Land Buddhism 159; Kumārajīva translation 150; laudatory self-reference in 158; Nichiren Shōnin tradition 165–7; parables 155–6; persecution evidence in 154–5; popularity 158–9; Sanskrit text 149–50; skill-in-means device 151–3, 155; Tiantai school 161–5

Madhyamakakārikā (Nāgārjuna) 64, 66, 68, 69, 71, 73–6, 81, 82, 114
Madhyamakāvatāra 51, 53, 63, 66, 74, 77, 204
Mādhyamika: causation critique 73–4; in China and East Asia 81–3; commentaries 51, 53, 63, 64, 66–9, 67, 68, 71, 73–7, 81, 82, 114, 204; and dissolution of the Self 2; on emptiness 68–9; in India 65–8; Jizang's teachings 82; meditation and emptiness 79–81; Nāgārjuna replies to accusations 76–7; nirvāṇa critique 75–6; *prasaṅga* method 71–2; Self critique 75–6; in Tibet 65–8; two truths 76–9
Madhyāntavibhāga (Maitreyanātha) 87, 88, 92, 93, 95, 97
Mahābhārata 12
Mahādeva 26; five points of 18–20
Mahāpadeśa Sūtra 42
Mahāparinibbāna Sutta 20, 107
Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra 13, 107–9, 120, 122, 157, 162, 164, 167
Mahāratnakūṭa Sūtra 46
Mahāsāṃghika schools 16
Mahāsāṃghika Vinaya 4
Mahāsāṃghikas, and the Lokottaravāda 18–21
mahāsattva 55
Mahāsthāmaprāpta 243, 259
Mahāvastu (Vinaya text) 20, 215
Mahāyāna: as *bodhisattvayāna* 5; defining 3; etymology 267; justification of Sūtras 38–44; origins of 21–7, 30–8, 47, 53
Mahāyānasaṃgraha 50, 87, 89
Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra 87, 96, 179, 180
Maitreyasiṃhanāda Sūtra 279
Maitreyavyākaraṇa 218
Mañjuśrīparinirvāṇa Sūtra 228
mappō (spiritual decline; 'Final Days') 149, 163, 165, 167–70, 248, 254
Māra (the Devil) 19, 38, 52, 216, 236
Mārkaṇḍeya Parvan 12
martial arts 120, 167
martyrdom, Nichiren's followers 167–70
Mauryan Empire (India) 10
medicine, Dharma as 1–2
Medicine Buddha *see* Bhaiṣajyaguru
meditation: and emptiness 79–81; forest hermits' practices 40–1; place in early Mahāyāna 30, *see also buddhānusmṛti*
meditations, graded 196–200
Memorial on the Bone of the Buddha (Han Yu) 131
merit, in Buddhist theory 21
merit transference 203
millenarianism 64, 145, 219
miracles, in East Asian Buddhism 139
monasteries 4, 5, 7, 22, 31, 33–7, 43, 120, 132, 139, 140, 147, 162, 163, 187–91, 223
monastic rules 15
monastic universities 84, 88, 190–1
monasticism 34, 55, 118, 189
Mongolia 190–1
monk's life, in India 34
moral unity, doctrinal diversity and 1–7
Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya 5
mummification 334; self- 219

Nālandā (monastic university) 84
Nara Buddhism 162–3
negation rhetoric 277
nenbutsu (recitation of the Buddha's name) 238, 251, 252, 254–7, 259, 262–4
Nepal 223, 227, 274*n43*, 281–2*n1*
Nipponzan Myōhōji sect 170
Niraupamyastava (Nagarjuna) 178
nirodhasamāpatti (attainment of cessation) 291
nirvāṇa; attaining in a Pure Land 216–17; basis for 92; Mādhyamika critique 75–6; Nāgārjuna on 76; non-abiding 60, 185–6; as nonorigination 111; Self or not-Self 125–8; Theravādin argument 125, 127–8; types of 59–60
nonconceptual awareness (*nirvikalpakajñāna*) 50
nonduality 96, 114, 123, 253
nonexistence 76–7, 81–2, 91, 93, 95
not-Self, in contemporary Thai Buddhism 125–8
noumenon 141–5, 335

On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land (Risshō Ankoku Ron) (Nichiren) 166
One Mind 116–17, 119, 143–4, 162
One Vehicle 105, 152, 153–4, 155, 246
oral transmission, evidence for 24
Other/Own Power 247, 248, 255, 258, 260–1, 263
outflows (*āsrava*) 290

Pai Lun (Śata Śāstra) (Āryadeva) 81
paintings, pedagogic devices in 251–2
Pali Canon 8, 39, 42, 209
Pali Vinaya 5
Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā 48, 56, 59
Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā Sūtra 56
panjiao schema 151, 162
parables: the burning house 155; *Lotus Sūtra* 155–6; the Place of Jewels 156; the Prodigal Son 155–6; the white path 251
paradise cults 211
Paramārthastava (Nāgārjuna) 178
paramopāsaka 269
Pāṭaliputra council 18
Path of Accumulation 200, 201
Path of Cultivation 203
Path of Insight 81, 201
Path of No-more Learning 207
Path of Preparation 80
Path of Seeing 307
perfected nature 91, 92, 96, 99, 305, 306
Perfection of Wisdom *see* Prajñāpāramitā literature
Perfection of Wisdom Sūtra *see Aṣṭasāhasrikā Sūtra*
persecution 248; evidence in *Lotus Sūtra* 154–5; Nichiren 169
phenomenon/noumenon 142–4
Place of Jewels parable 156
Pradakṣiṇā Sūtra 28
prajñā, definition 49–50
prajñāpāramitā, meanings 177
Prajñāpāramitā literature: Absence of Self 51–5; the Bodhisattva 55–62; Conze's chronology 48–9, 51–2; *dharmakāya* in 176–8; ontological message 52–3; origins and development 47–9; as word of the Buddha 86
Prajñāpāramitāhṛdaya (Heart) Sūtra 284
Prajñāpradīpa (Bhāvaviveka) 66
Prāsaṅgika Mādhyamika 65–7, 69–72, 112, 114, 115, 178, 182, 183, 199
Prāsaṅgika tradition, founder 66
Prasannapadā (Candrakāirti) 66, 71
Pratyekabuddhas 53–6, 59, 98, 105, 153, 154, 156, 185, 206, 207
pratyutpanna samādhi 212–14
Pratyutpanna Sūtra 25, 39–40, 48, 89, 212, 214, 243
Prodigal Son parable 155–6
'Protestant' Buddhism 326
pudgala 14
Pure Land tradition 40, 212–14; Bodhicitta in 241, 243, 257, 258, 265, 385; in China 243–54; in Japan 159, 243–4, 254; origins 238–9

Pūrvaśaila school 17, 20, 50
Putuo (P'u-t'o) Shan 223

Qing (Ch'ing) dynasty 81, 253

radical asceticism 31
rang stong 112, 114
Rāṣṭrapālaparipṛcchā Sūtra 31–5
Ratnagotravibhāga 87, 103, 109–12, 115, 116, 121
Ratnaguṇasaṃcayagāthā 48, 49, 51, 52, 53, 56–7
Ratnakūṭa collection 172
Ratnarāśi Sūtra 6
Ratnāvalī 64, 65, 178
rebirth: and merit 145, 216; in the Pure Land 233–4, 248, 263, 265; purpose 214; and respect for ancestors 130; Welch on 230, *see also saṃsāra*
recitation of names (*nenbutsu*) 238, 251, 252, 254–7, 259, 262–4
Red Hats 190
reincarnation 169, 190, 191
reverse transmission (China to India) 284
'rhetoric of negation' 277
Rinzai Zen 120
Risshō Ankoku Ron (Nichiren) 166
Risshō Kōsei Kai 170–1
Ritsu sect 166
rNying ma (Nying ma) school 115, 188, 194

Saddharmapuṇḍarīka Sūtra 46, 149, *see also Lotus Sūtra*
Sahā 215, 217
śākyabhikṣu 269
Saṃdhinirmocana Sūtra 85–6, 89–91, 97–9, 199
saṃsāra (cycle of reincarnation) 41, 61, 76, 92, 94, 96, 106, 107, 116, 118, 155, 185, 186, 192, 193, 195–7, 205, 206, 214, 216, 225, 247, 251, 264
samurai 120
Sangha, splitting of the 4
Sanjie Jiao (Three Stages School) 320
Śāntarakṣita 67; Tibetan experience 188; Yogācāra elements 67
Saptabuddha Sūtra 234, 236, 237
Saptaśatikā Prajñāpāramitā 211, 227
Sarvadharmāpravṛttinirdeśa Sūtra 37–8
Sarvāstivāda (Vaibhāṣika) tradition 6, 16, 18, 68, 175, 176, 195, 200
Śatasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā 46, 48, 49
satya ([two] truths) 76–9
Satyadvayāvatāra (Atiśa) 77
Sautrāntika school 15
Sautrāntika-Svātantrika Mādhyamika 65, 67
schism 4, 12, 18, 19
Second Council 18
sect/school, concept analysis 267
Self: absence of 15–18, 51–5; dissolution of 2; Nāgārjuna on 74; and *tathāgatagarbha* 107, 108–9, 112
self-abandonment (*shinjin*) 208, 261–5
self-empty/other-empty teachings 114–15
self-immolation 160–1
self-mummification 219
self-reference, laudatory 158
Senchakushū (Hōnen) 257
seven-limbed ritual 137–8
shakubuku 170
Shaolin monks 167
Shelun school 99, 103
Shiermenlun 81
Shingon (tantric) sect 166, 219, 257
Shintō 121
Shōbōgenzō (Dōgen) 120
Śikṣānanda 133
Śikṣāsamuccaya 41–2
Silk Road 130
six perfections 47, 51, 192–4, 200, 202–6, 253, 337, 337–8, 338, 357–9
skill-in-means doctrine 57, 86, 108, 136, 150–7, 178, 189, 200, 206
Sōka Gakkai 170, 171
Sōtō Zen *see* Zen
Śrāvaka, meditative cognizance 62
Sri Lanka 5, 223
Śrīmālā Sūtra 119, 140
Śrīmālādevīsiṃhanāda Sūtra 105–7, 110, 114, 116, 119, 140, 160
Sthaviravāda, definition 18

Sthaviravādins 18–20
stūpa worship 9, 22, 23, 24, 28, 43, 176–7
substratum consciousness (*ālayavijñāna*) 97–100, 103, 308, 309, 329
succession, in Buddhist tradition 12–13
Suchness/Thusness 91, 110
Sudden Enlightenment 145, 162, 263
Sudden Teaching 144–5
Suhṛllekha 65
Sui dynasty 132, 162
suicide 28, 58, 64, 160, 192, 250
Sukhāvatī 28, 64, 159, 213, 214, 222, 229, 232, 236, 239, 241–4, 246–51, 254
Sukhāvatīvyūha Sūtra 239–41; on appearance of Sukhāvatī 241; on Dharmākara 240; origins 239–40; rebirth in a Pure Land 242
Sukhāvatīvyūha Sūtras 239–41, 244, 250
Sukhāvatīvyūhopadeśa 246, 247
supramundane (*lokottara*) teaching 15–16, 17, 18, 20–1, 96, 126, 175, 178, 215, 217, 238–9
Śūraṃgamasamādhi Sūtra 228
Sūryagarbha Sūtra 34
sūtras: detecting insertions 46–7; distinction between *śāstras* and 85; East Asian emphasis 129; features of earlier 46; justification of the Mahāyāna 38–44; methods of study 45–6; origins 39; sectarian origins 6
Sutta Nipāta 39, 209, 39, 53, 209
Suvarṇabhāsottama (Golden Light) Sūtra 166
svabhāva (intrinsic nature) 52, 63, 67–8, 70–2, 75, 78, 93, 108
Svātantrika Mādhyamika 65–7, 73, 178, 182
Svātantrika tradition, founder 66

Ta-ch'eng ch'i-hsin lun 110, 115–17, 119, 121, 129, 140, 142, 143, 157
Ta-chih-tu Lun 6, 65, 81
tainted mind (*kliṣṭamanas*) 97
Tang dynasty 131, 132, 139, 145, 162, 213, 229
Tannishō (Yui-en) 260
tantricism 48–9, 128, 162, 166, 189–90, 203, 207, 226, 228, 234, 282
Tao 50, 141, 220
Taoism 50, 83, 120, 131, 132, 141, 214
Tārā Tantra 225
Tarkajvālā (Bhāvaviveka) 66
Tathāgatagarbha: chronology 109; Critical Buddhism movement 122–5; *Dasheng qixinlun* and the 115–19; Dōgen on the Buddha-nature 119–22; Empress Wu's interest 140; emptiness in 112–13; *gzhan stong/rang stong* dispute 112–15; not-Self doctrine 125–8; in the *Ratnagotravibhāga* 109–12; relationship with Yogācāra and Mādhyamika 103; and Self 107, 108–9; Sūtras 104–9
Tathāgatagarbha Sūtra 6, 104–5
Ten Mysterious Gates 143
ten stages to enlightenment (*bhūmi*) 81, 192, 200–2, 204–5, 207
textual communities 281
Thai Buddhism, not-Self in 125–8
Theravāda: constituents 16–17; schismatic account 18; in Sri Lanka 5; in Thailand 125
Three Great Secret Laws 168–9
three natures 88–92
Three Treatises 81–2
Tiantai (Tendai) school 161–5
Tibet: eighth-century debates 191–4; first monastery 188; *gzhan stong/rang stong* dispute 112–15; Mādhyamika tradition 65–8; monastic codes 4–5; transmission of Buddhism to 187–91
Tibetan Buddhism, features 110
Tōdaiji monastery 140, 147
trade routes, role in spread of Buddhism 129–30
transference of merit 203
Transformation Bodies 137, 181–6, 182, 185, 186, 217, 248
Triṃśikā (Vasubandhu) 87, 88, 90, 93, 96, 97, 100
Tripiṭaka 16, 84
trisvabhāva (three natures) 88–92
Trisvabhāvanirdeśa 87

truth: conventional 76–7, 82, 183–4, 249; two levels of 82–3; ultimate 50, 52, 70, 76–8, 82–3, 111, 121, 143, 157, 177, 179, 183–4, 227, 264
Turning of the Wheel of Dharma 85
Tuṣita heaven 86, 183, 219, 220

Ugraparipṛcchā Sūtra 6, 35–7
Ultimate Reality 75
ultimate truth 50, 52, 70, 76–8, 82–3, 111, 121, 143, 157, 177, 179, 183–4, 227, 264
universities, monastic 84, 88, 190–1
Upāyakauśalya Sūtra 151–2
Uttaravipatti Sutta 42

Vaibhāṣika (Sarvāstivāda) tradition 6, 16, 18, 68, 175, 176, 195, 200
Vaidalyaprakaraṇa 64
Vaiśālī council 18
Vajracchedikā 48–9, *see also Diamond Sūtra*
Valabhī university 88
Vātsīputrīya-Sāṃmitīya school 14
vegetarianism 315
vetullavāda 5
Vietnam 84, 161
Vigrahavyāvartanī (Nāgārjuna) 64, 71
Vikramaśīla (monastic university) 84
Vimalakīrtinirdeśa Sūtra 22, 83, 123, 160, 217, 227, 232, 249, 253, 265
Viṃśatikā (Twenty Verses) 87
Vinaya, extant texts 4–5
Vinaya rules 4
violence 152, 164–5, 167, 172
vipaśyanā (insight meditation) 79–81, 95–6
visionary experiences 39, 139, 175
Vyavahārasiddhi 64

warrior philosophy 25
Wheel of Dharma, Turning of the 85
White Lotus Society 361
white path parable 251
wisdom, perfection of *see prajñā*; Prajñāpāramitā literature
Wisdom Body 113, 182–4
with-form/without-form debate 101
women: as Bodhisattvas 140; in Buddhist teachings 32, 35, 256; in *Lotus Sūtra* 159; and rebirth 235, 236; *Sūtra* representations 29, 35
Wutai Shan 227, 229

Yama 237
Yellow Hats *see* dGe lugs school
Yijing (I-tsing) 5, 132
Yogācāra: background 84–9; bodies of the Buddha in 179–82; key doctrines 89; levels of consciousness 97–100; mind in 92–6; origins 219; and Pure Land tradition 245; scholars and texts 86–8; system development 179–82; the three natures 88–92; transformations of consciousness 100–1; with-form/without-form debate 101
Yogācāra-Svātantrika Mādhyamika 65, 67, 182
Yogācārabhūmi 87
Yuan dynasty 190
Yuezhi (Kuṣāṇas) 10–11
Yuktiṣaṣṭikā 64

Zen 47, 123, 194; etymology 119, *see also* Chan
Zhonglun (Chung lun) 81
Zoroastrianism 220

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