

# Who Gets to Ride in the Great Vehicle? Self-Image and Identity Among the Followers of the Early Mahāyāna

*by Paul Harrison*

As far as most Buddhist scholars nowadays are concerned, the Mahāyāna was a movement which originated in India some 300 or 400 years after the death of Gautama. Building on various doctrinal developments among certain schools of the so-called Hīnayāna, notably the Mahāsāṅghikas, it promoted a new ideal, that of the *bodhisattva*, or *buddha-to-be*, as opposed to the older *arhat*-ideal. In criticizing the *arhat* the early Mahāyānists are commonly thought to have been striking a blow against the monastic elitism of the Hīnayāna; and their new ideal is supposed to have been developed, in part at least, as a response to the spiritual needs and concerns of the laity.<sup>1</sup> This supposition also finds expression in the claim that, since the Buddha himself had been idealised beyond human reach, the *bodhisattvas* were invented as fitting recipients of the devotion (*bhakti*) of the masses, objects of a cult analogous to the cult of the saints in Christianity.<sup>2</sup> It has also been suggested that the new movement looked more favourably on the religious aspirations and capabilities of women. All these factors are cited as reasons for the success the Mahāyāna enjoyed in establishing itself as a truly popular religion, first in India and subsequently in other countries.

This paper sets out to examine all these assumptions, and to ask the question 'What did it mean to be a follower of the Mahāyāna?' In other words, who or what is a *bodhisattva*? Are *bodhisattvas* really exalted beings, 'divine saviors' or 'saints', or are they ordinary mortals? Can laypeople be *bodhisattvas*? Can

women be *bodhisattvas*? And whatever the answers to these questions, what were the consequences of affiliation with the Mahāyāna for people's sense of their own religious identity vis-à-vis other Buddhists, and in relation to followers of other religious paths?

These are, of course, wide-ranging questions, and none of them is amenable to a simple answer. To reduce the scope of the problem, I propose to confine my remarks to the early Mahāyāna, using as sources the first Chinese translations of Mahāyāna *sūtras*. This comparatively small body of texts—11 in all—was produced in the second half of the 2nd century C.E., or shortly thereafter, by a small group of foreign translators working in the Han capital of Luoyang; most of them are the work of the Indo-Scythian Lokakṣema, active c. 168–189 C.E. Their value lies in the fact that they are the oldest literary evidence for the Mahāyāna, and preserve the earliest phase of that movement frozen, as it were, in an archaic semi-vernacular Chinese; later translations and the Sanskrit texts themselves can and often do contain later accretions, which reduce their value as historical evidence, at least as far as the early period is concerned. The 11 translations themselves have been described at length elsewhere<sup>3</sup>; here they need only be listed with a few essential details:

1. AsPP : T.224<sup>4</sup>, *Daoxing banruo jing*<sup>a</sup>

= *Aṣṭasāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā-sūtra*

Translated by Lokakṣema and Zhu Foshuo, 179 C.E.

There are six other Chinese translations, and one Tibetan translation, the *'Phags-pa shes-rab-kyi pha-rol-tu phyin-pa brgyad-stong-pa*.

The Sanskrit text is extant, and has been rendered into English by E. Conze: *The Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Lines and its Verse Summary* (1st ed., Asiatic Society of Calcutta, Calcutta, 1958; reprinted, with corrections, Four Seasons Foundation, Bolinas, Cal., 1975). For full bibliographical details of this key text in its many versions, see E. Conze, *The Prajñāpāramitā Literature* (2nd ed., The Reiyukai, Tokyo, 1978), pp. 46–50.

2. PraS : T.418, *Banzhou sanmei jing*<sup>b</sup>

= *Pratyutpanna-buddha-saṃmukhāvasthita-samādhi-sūtra*

Translated by Lokakṣema, Zhu Foshuo *et al.*, 179 C.E., sub-

sequently revised, probably by members of Lokakṣema's school, in 208. Parts of the original version survive.

There are three other Chinese translations (T.416, T.417, T.419) and one Tibetan version, the *'Phags-pa da-ltar-gyi sangs-rgyas mngon-sum-du bzhugs-pa'i ting-nge-'dzin ces-bya-ba theg-pa chen-po'i mdo*, for a critical edition of which see P. Harrison, *The Tibetan Text of the Pratyutpanna-Buddha-Saṃmukhāvasthita-Samādhi-Sūtra* (Studia Philologica Buddhica, Monograph Series, I) (The Reiyukai Library, Tokyo, 1978). The Sanskrit text is lost, except for one small fragment, published as the "Bhadrāpāla Sūtra" in A.F. Rudolf Hoernle, ed., *Manuscript Remains of Buddhist Literature* (Oxford, 1916), pp. 88–93, 410–411. An English translation and study of this text is currently being prepared by the author, and a translation of T.418 itself is in press.

3. 3DKP : T.624, *Dun zhentuoluo suowen rulai sanmei jing*<sup>c</sup>

= *Druma-kinnararāja-paripṛcchā-sūtra*

Translated by Lokakṣema, c. 168–189 C.E.

There is one other Chinese translation (T.625), and one Tibetan version, entitled *'Phags-pa mi-'am-ci'i rgyal-po sdong-pos zhus-pa zhes-bya-ba theg-pa chen-po'i mdo*. The Sanskrit text has been lost.

4. AjKV : T.626, *Azheshi wang jing*<sup>d</sup>

= *Ajātaśatru-kaukrtya-vinodanā-sūtra*

Translated by Lokakṣema, c. 168–189 C.E.

There are three other Chinese translations (T.627, T.628, T.629), and one Tibetan version, the *'Phags-pa ma-skyes-dgra'i 'gyod-pa bsal-ba zhes-bya-ba theg-pa chen-po'i mdo*. The Sanskrit text is not extant.

5. TSC : T.280, *Dousha jing*<sup>e</sup>

= part of the *Avatamsaka-sūtra*

Translated by Lokakṣema, c. 168–189 C.E.

There are two other Chinese versions (T.278, T.279), and one Tibetan version, the *Sangs-rgyas phal-po-che zhes-bya-ba shin-tu rgyas-pa chen-po'i mdo*. The material corresponding to the TSC occurs in Chap. XII (*Sangs-rgyas-kyi mtshan shin-tu bstan-pa*) and Chap. XIV (*De-bzhin gshegs-pa'i 'od-zer-las rnam-par sangs-rgyas-pa*). For a partial English translation of this text see Thomas Cleary, transl., *The Flower Ornament Scripture: A Translation of the*

*Avatamsaka Sūtra*, Vol. I (Shambhala, Boulder, 1984).

6. LAN : T.807, *Neizang baibao jing*<sup>f</sup>

= *Lokānuvartana-sūtra*

Translated by Lokakṣema, c. 168–189 C.E.

No other Chinese versions survive, but there is one Tibetan version, the '*Phags-pa 'jig-rten-gyi rjes-su 'thun-par 'jug-pa zhes-bya-ba theg-pa chen-po'i mdo*. The complete Sanskrit text is lost, but a substantial number of verses from it appear in the *Mahāvastu* and the *Prasannapadā*, for which see P. Harrison, "Sanskrit Fragments of a Lokottaravādin Tradition" in L.A. Hercus *et al.*, eds., *Indological and Buddhist Studies: Volume in Honour of Professor J.W. de Jong on his Sixtieth Birthday* (Faculty of Asian Studies, Canberra, 1982), pp. 211–234.

7. WWP : T.458, *Wenshushili wen pusa shu jing*<sup>g</sup>

= Sanskrit title unknown

Translated by Lokakṣema, c. 168–189 C.E.

There are no other versions; the Sanskrit text is lost.

8. KP : T.350, *Yiri monibao jing*<sup>h</sup>

= *Kāśyapa-parivarta*

Translated by Lokakṣema, c. 168–189 C.E.

For a German rendering of Lokakṣema's version, see F. Weller, "Kāśyapaparivarta nach der Han-Fassung verdeutscht", *Buddhist Yearly* 1968/69 (Halle, 1970), pp. 57–221.

There are four other Chinese versions: T.351 (F. Weller, "Kāśyapaparivarta nach der Djin-Fassung verdeutscht", *Mitteilungen des Instituts für Orientforschung*, XII (1966), pp. 379–462), T.310, No. 43 (F. Weller, "Kāśyapaparivarta nach der Tjin-Übersetzung verdeutscht", *Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift der Karl-Marx-Universität Leipzig*, XIII (1964), Heft 4, pp. 771–804), T.659 (Chap. VII), and T.352 (F. Weller, "Die Sung-Fassung des Kāśyapaparivarta", *Monumenta Serica*, XXV (1966), pp. 207–361).

The Tibetan version, the '*Od-srung-gi le'u*, appears with four Chinese versions in the well-known edition of the Sanskrit text by A. von Stäel-Holstein, *The Kāśyapaparivarta, A Mahāyānasūtra of the Ratnakūṭa Class* (Shanghai, 1926; reprinted, Meicho-Fukyū-Kai, Tokyo, 1977); see also J.W. de Jong, "Sanskrit Fragments

of the Kāśyapaparivarta" in *Beiträge zur Indienforschung Ernst Waldschmidt zum 80. Geburtstag gewidmet* (Museum für Indische Kunst, Berlin, 1977), pp. 247–255.

There are a number of modern-language translations of this important text: F. Weller, *Zum Kāśyapaparivarta*, Heft 2, Verdeutschung des sanskrit-tibetischen Textes (*Abhandlungen der sächsischen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Leipzig, Philologisch-historische Klasse*, Band 57, Heft 3) (Berlin, 1965); Bhikkhu Pasadika, "The Dharma-Discourse of the Great Collection of Jewels, The Kāśyapa Section", published serially in *Linh Son publication d'études bouddhologiques*, I–IX (1977–79); Garma C.C. Chang, ed., *A Treasury of Mahāyāna Sūtras: Selections from the Mahāratnakūṭa Sūtra* (Pennsylvania State University Press, University Park, Penn., 1983), pp. 387–414; Nagao Gadjin and Sakurabe Hajime, "Kashō-hon", in *Daijō butten*, Vol. IX (Chūōkōronsha, Tokyo, 1974), pp. 5–124.

9. AkTV : T.313, *Achūfo guo jing*<sup>i</sup>  
 = *Akṣobhya-tathāgatasya-vyūha-sūtra*  
 Attributed to Lokakṣema, but probably the work of one of his contemporaries or of later members of his school.

Although the Sanskrit text has been lost, we still possess one other Chinese version (T.310, No. 6) and one Tibetan version, the 'Phags-pa de-bzhin-gshegs-pa mi-'khrugs-pa'i bkod-pa zhes-bya-ba theg-pa chen-po'i mdo. For full bibliographical details, see *Buddhist Text Information*, 40–41 (June & Sept. 1984). A partial French translation has been published by J. Dantinne: *La Splendeur de l'Inébranlable (Akṣobhyavyūha)*, Tome I (Université Catholique de Louvain, Institut Orientaliste, Louvain-la-Neuve, 1983), while an English translation (with omissions) based on the Chinese text (T.310,6) may be found in Garma C.C. Chang, ed., *op. cit.*, pp. 315–338.

10. CGD : T.630, *Chengju guangming dingyi jing*<sup>j</sup>  
 = Sanskrit title unknown.  
 Attributed to Zhi Yao, active late 2nd century.  
 There are no other versions; the Sanskrit text is lost.

11. UP : T.322, *Fa jing jing*<sup>k</sup>

= *Ugra (datta)-paripṛcchā-sūtra*

Translated by An Xuan and Yan Fotiao, active c. 180 C.E.

There are two other Chinese versions (T.310, No. 19, and T.323) and one Tibetan version, the *'Phags-pa drag-shul-can-gyis zhus-pa zhes-bya-ba theg-pa chen-po'i mdo*, which has been translated into Japanese by Sakurabe Hajime in *Daijō butten*, Vol. IX (Chūōkōronsha, Tokyo, 1974), pp. 231–335.

It should be noted here that the use of these texts for historical research into Indian Buddhism presents certain problems, although, due to considerations of space, a full methodological discussion will have to be reserved for a later date. As translations they are reasonably reliable, but by no means as reliable as their Tibetan counterparts, against which they need to be checked. Although they were all produced at roughly the same time and roughly the same place, the original *sūtras* may well have been written at different times, in different places, and by different hands. Furthermore, those hands were almost certainly those of literate males, probably monks, which means that the *sūtras* must represent a limited point of view, albeit an influential one. These problems are all serious, to be sure, but it can nevertheless be argued that if these texts are used with the appropriate caution, their evidential value is substantial, especially in view of the fact that, apart from a small number of inscriptions,<sup>5</sup> we have little else to assist our enquiries. They certainly contain sufficient data to enable us to arrive at unequivocal answers to at least some of our questions.

To begin with, how is the Mahāyāna referred to in these translations? The term *Mahāyāna* itself is found, either transliterated (*moheyan*<sup>1</sup>) or translated (*dadao*<sup>m</sup>, “the Great Way”), but it is surprisingly rare (about 20 occurrences in all). Not much more frequent is the use of the term “Bodhisattva Way” (*oyasadao*<sup>n</sup>), which may or may not render *bodhisattvayāna* or *bodhisattvamārga* in the original Sanskrit (or Indic) text. If we examine those translations for which the Sanskrit is still extant, we find, e.g., that in Lokakṣema’s version of the *KP pusadao* occurs several times, twice translating *mahāyāna* (*KP* 3, 118), once *bodhisattva-mārga* (*KP* 12), and once in a periphrastic rendering of *udārādhimukta* as “those who delight in the Bodhisattva

Way” (KP 11). In the *AsPP* we find it used for *duṣkara-cārikā* (428b18) and *bodhisattva-cārikā* (428b20), but most often, in the expression *xing pusadao zhe*<sup>o</sup>, it renders *bodhisattvayānikāḥ pudgalāḥ*, “people who are adherents of the Bodhisattvayāna” (e.g. 447b3,24–25,465c9–10). When the term is found in other translations it usually occurs in the phrase *xing* (or *qiu*) *pusadao zhe*<sup>P</sup>, “those who practise (or seek) the Bodhisattva Way”, pointing once again to an original *bodhisattvayānika*. The rarity of the terms *mahāyāna* and *bodhisattvayāna* already invites the conclusion that at this stage there was no rigid division of the Buddhist Sangha into two hostile camps to the extent that the modern understanding of the terms ‘Mahāyāna’ and ‘Hīnayāna’ implies. There was indeed a new spirit abroad: the authors of our texts are devoted to its promulgation, but there is little evidence of any urge on their part to enshrine their different point of view in hard and fast sectarian categories, something to which we shall return later. Rather than speak of the Mahāyāna, they chose to address themselves to those substantive issues which we have come to associate with that movement, i.e. the doctrines of emptiness (*śūnyatā*), the perfection of wisdom (*prajñāpāramitā*) and the five other perfections, skill-in-means (*upāyakauśalya*) and, above all, the career of the *bodhisattva*, the aspirant to awakening or buddhahood. It is especially in their treatment of the *bodhisattva* that we can see how these early Mahāyāna writers conceived of their identity and their place within the Buddhist world.

In these archaic Chinese texts the word *bodhisattva* is almost always transliterated as *pusa*<sup>q</sup>, although the *UP* uses the translation *kaishi*<sup>r</sup> (“the revealer”) while the *CGD* has settled on the rendering *mingshi*<sup>s</sup> (“the enlightened one”). In most of our *sūtras* the word occurs prolifically, and is generally neutral with regard to lay/monastic status and gender. (As far as the latter is concerned, this is not surprising, since Classical Chinese lacks any kind of inflectional system for conveying distinctions of gender, number and case; but in the original Sanskrit *sūtras* the word *bodhisattva* would always have been masculine.) Frequently, however, different types of *bodhisattvas* are distinguished, the most common distinction being a twofold one between ‘renunciant’ or ‘monastic’ *bodhisattvas*, those who have left the household life to devote themselves full-time to spiritual matters, and ‘house-

holder' or 'lay' *bodhisattvas*, who practise their religion as full members of society. These two categories are sometimes further subdivided according to gender to arrive at the "four classes of disciples", i.e. *bodhisattvas* who are monks, nuns, laymen and laywomen. I propose to look at the basic twofold lay/monastic division first, and then examine the male/female one to see what distinction, if any, is made on the basis of gender. As simple as this approach sounds, it does present difficulties, since the male is taken as paradigmatic, and is often clearly intended even when the texts are speaking generally in terms which could apply equally well to men and women. Before we look at these divisions, however, let us first see what terms are used to refer to the "four classes of disciples" collectively and individually.

The expression "four classes of disciples" itself (Chinese: *sibei dizi*<sup>t</sup> or *sibu dizi*<sup>u</sup>) occurs occasionally (e.g. *AsPP* 467b29, 469a18–19; *AkTV* 757b15–16; *CGD* 456a2; *PraS* 915a10), as does the full enumeration of these classes, i.e. *biqiu biqiuni youposai youpoyi*<sup>v</sup> (= *bhikṣus*, *bhikṣuṇīs*, *upāsakas* and *upāsikās*, or monks, nuns, laymen and laywomen; e.g. *PraS* 918a8–9; *DKP* 364a18).<sup>6</sup> These terms are, of course, of general application, and are frequently used in our texts without any specific reference to followers of the Mahāyāna. Often, however, the connection is explicit, especially in those few passages in which the four classes are discussed in sequence. The best example of this is Chapter 6 of Lokakṣema's version of the *PraS*, which deals in turn with "Bodhisattvas who forsake desire and become *bhikṣus*" (*pusa qi aiyu zuo biqiu*<sup>w</sup>), "*bhikṣuṇīs* who are *mahāyāna-saṃprasthita*" i.e. nuns who have set out in the Mahāyāna (*biqiuni qiu moheyan-sanbazhi*<sup>x</sup>),<sup>7</sup> "white-robed *bodhisattvas* who cultivate the Way while living at home" (*baiyi pusa jujia xiudao*<sup>y</sup>) and "*upāsikās* who are *mahāyāna-saṃprasthita*" (*youpoyi qiu moheyan-sanbazhi*<sup>z</sup>) (*PraS* 909b12–910c29). We also find the expressions *bhikṣu-bodhisattva* or *bodhisattva-bhikṣu*, i.e. *biqiu pusa*<sup>aa</sup> (e.g. *PraS* 909b24, 26–27; *AkTV* 752c22; *AsPP* 461b23), or, in the more idiosyncratic renderings of the *CGD* and the *UP*, *kaishi qujia wei* (or *xiu*) *dao*<sup>ab</sup> ("the revealer who has left home to pursue the Way": *UP* 15c3, 10–11; 19c1–2) or *mingshi chu-e*<sup>ac</sup> ("the enlightened one who eliminates evil": *CGD* 451b7, 458b10), in which *qujia*<sup>ad</sup> and its equivalents are probably doing service for an original Sanskrit *pravrajita*, "one who has gone forth". Often,



however, it is simply clear from the context that the text is dealing with *renunciant bodhisattvas*, and the same holds true for lay *bodhisattvas*, who, when specified, are referred to as *zaijia*<sup>ae</sup> or *jujia*<sup>af</sup> *pusa* (“*bodhisattvas* who remain in the home”) or *baiyi*<sup>ag</sup> *pusa* (“white-robed *bodhisattvas*”). Our texts devote considerable attention to these lay *bodhisattvas*, those who pursue the goal of buddhahood through observance of the Five Precepts, study of Mahāyāna *sūtras* and meditation. One passage in the *PraS* on the layman *bodhisattva* sums up much of this material particularly well:

“White-robed *bodhisattvas* who, on hearing this *samādhi*, wish to study and cultivate it, should adhere firmly to the Five Precepts and keep themselves pure. They should not drink wine, nor should they give it to others to drink. They should not have intercourse with women—they should not have it themselves, nor should they teach others to have it. They should not have any affection for their wives, they should not hanker after their sons and daughters, and they should not hanker after possessions. They should always think longingly of leaving their wives and taking up life as *śramaṇas*. They should always keep the Eightfold Fast, and at the time of the Fast they should always fast in a Buddhist monastery. They should always think of giving without thinking that they themselves will get merit from it—they should give for the sake of all people. They should love their good teachers, and when they see *bhikṣus* who keep the precepts they ought not to despise them or speak ill of them.” (*PraS* 910b12–21)

A number of common themes stand out here. These *bodhisattvas* may well be in the world, but they are not of it. Like lotuses, they grow out of the mud of the passions (*KP* 72–75), but because of their endowment with wisdom and skill-in-means they are undefiled by them (*KP* 48; *DKP* 351a2–4). To ensure that they remain undefiled, they must be strict in their adherence to the Five Precepts, especially those relating to intoxicants and sex, hence a negative attitude to all possible objects of attachment, particularly wives and children, is often recommended (e.g. *UP* 16c2–17a14, 18b7–c11; *AsPP* 455b20–26). This incidentally reveals the extent to which these *sūtras* were written from a male point of view, since *bodhisattvas* are never urged to regard their husbands as demons, sources of misery and so on. The house-

hold life is in fact a curse, since it destroys all one's 'roots of goodness' and only heaps more fuel on the fire of the passions (UP 17b20–c26), consequently *bodhisattvas* are best advised to quit it as soon as possible (DKP 353b26–27, 356c28–29). But as long as they choose to retain their lay status, they should not forget to treat their monastic counterparts with due reverence and generosity (UP 16a5–12, 19a1–b24). It is clear, therefore, that there is a definite ambivalence in these texts about the position of lay *bodhisattvas*. On the one hand lay *bodhisattvas* frequently occupy the centre stage, both in terms of the narrative framework of the *sūtras* and in terms of the teachings expounded in them (this is especially so in the *PraS*, *CGD* and *UP*); on the other hand they are constantly exhorted to leave lay life behind, to become renunciants, and, what is more, to embrace the “ascetic qualities” (*dhuta-guṇa*), the discipline of the solitary forest-dwelling monk or nun (KP 17, *PraS* 903b24–25; cf. *AsPP* 461a10–b18). The *UP* even goes so far as to say that “no *bodhisattva* has ever attained the Way [i.e. awakening] as a householder: they all leave home and go into the wild, and it is by living in the wild that they attain the Way” (UP 19a21–22). As for the renunciant *bodhisattvas* themselves, in those passages which are explicitly or implicitly devoted to them, observance of the *Vinaya* looms large, together with respect for teachers, especially those from whom they hear Mahāyāna *sūtras*, be they male or female, lay or renunciant (e.g. *PraS* 909c1–9). Renunciants are urged to teach in their turn, to give the ‘gift of the Dharma’, but without any expectation of reward. For them too the virtues of the solitary life are extolled, as well as the conquest of desires and attachments, and they are warned of the perils of doubt and sloth. Most of this material, with its strong ethical emphasis, is of course fairly standard to all forms of Buddhism.

Despite some ambivalence about the value of the household life, we can see already that there is no doubt about the existence of both lay and renunciant *bodhisattvas*. Even *bodhisattvas* who have attained the advanced stage of ‘non-regression’, who are *avaivartika*, assured of attaining awakening, can still be laypeople (see e.g. *AsPP* 455b20–c5). However, when we turn to the question of whether women can be full *bodhisattvas*, the answer is not so clear. We have already observed that in listing the four classes of disciples, the *PraS* describes nuns and laywomen not

as *bodhisattvas*, as it does the monks and laymen, but as *mahāyāna-saṃprasthita*, “set out in the Mahāyāna”. In other words it scrupulously avoids calling women *bodhisattvas*. Theoretically speaking, women should be capable of assuming the title *bodhisattva*. In nearly all our texts the teachings are addressed to “sons and daughters of good family” (Sanskrit: *kulaputra-kuladuhitr*; Chinese usually: *shan nanzi shan nüren*<sup>ah</sup>),<sup>8</sup> and it is made clear in most cases that both groups are expected to embrace the particular doctrine or practice being expounded. Furthermore, in some texts the terms “sons and daughters of good family” and “*bodhisattvas*” are used interchangeably (e.g. *AsPP* 446b10ff.; *AkTV* 759a16ff., 762a16; *WWP* 435b14–15; *UP* 15b24ff.), though it is not always the case that sons and daughters of good family are followers of the Mahāyāna (e.g. *AkTV* 763b17–21). In addition, women can conceive the aspiration to awakening (*bodhicitta*). This happens in at least two texts, the *DKP*, in which the 84,000 wives of King Druma take this step (359b11ff., 360c26ff.), and the *AsPP*, in which an *upāsikā* by the name of Dajie<sup>ai</sup> (Sanskrit equivalent unknown) has her eventual awakening predicted by Śākyamuni, who recalls her initial aspiration to it under the Buddha Dīpaṃkara.<sup>9</sup> Now those who have conceived the aspiration to awakening—who have, in other words, “set out in the Mahāyāna” (*mahāyāna-saṃprasthita*)<sup>10</sup>—are technically *bodhisattvas*, yet our *sūtras* display a consistent (or perhaps inconsistent?) reluctance to accord this title to women. This can only be because of a negative attitude towards the female sex, an attitude which is clearly demonstrable throughout these early texts. The *DKP* provides the best example of it. Even though the 84,000 wives of Druma conceive the aspiration to awakening, they are concerned about the fact that “it is difficult for a woman to attain *anuttara-samyak-sambodhi*”, whereupon the Buddha proceeds to tell them at length about the things they have to do to leave off being women and quickly attain rebirth as males (*DKP* 361b9–362a2). Later he predicts their rebirth as males in the Tuṣita heaven in the presence of Maitreya (362a20–28). This theme of the undesirability of birth as a woman and the necessity of a change of sex is a common one: the *upāsikā* Dajie has to be reborn as a male before she makes any real progress (*AsPP* 458a18–19), while the same is true of Sadāprarudita’s 500 female companions (*AsPP* 477b14–

17). In other texts as well women are told that they should always aspire to rebirth as males (e.g. *CGD* 457b19–20). According to the *AsPP* (454b27–28) non-regressing *bodhisattvas* are never reborn as women, although the *DKP* claims that a *bodhisattva* endowed with skill-in-means may manifest in female form in order to teach women (358c11).<sup>11</sup>

When we look at the descriptions of buddhafiels, which represent ideal worlds from a Buddhist point of view, we find that either women are not present at all, as in Druma's *buddhakṣetra* Candravimala (*DKP* 362a17), or they are infinitely more beautiful and virtuous than the women of this world, as in Akṣobhya's *buddhakṣetra* Abhirati (*AkTV* 755c28–756a2). The portrayal of the female inhabitants of Abhirati is especially revealing (756b3–15), since they are supposed to lack the vices of the women of this world, who are said to be "ill-favoured and ugly, with harsh tongues, jealous of the Dharma and addicted to heretical practices". For the paragons of femininity in Abhirati, by contrast, fine clothes and jewelry literally grow on trees, they feel no pain or weariness in pregnancy or childbirth, and they are free of "offensive discharge from the stinking place" (undoubtedly the 'polluting' flow of menstrual blood), all thanks to the former vow of Akṣobhya (see *AkTV* 753a11–16 for this; cf. *AsPP* 455b19–25). The supposed foibles and defects of women are also highlighted in these *sūtras* by those passages which deal with the special regulations and requirements for nuns and laywomen who follow the Bodhisattva Path (see esp. *PraS* 910a15–b9, c6–29; *CGD* 457b14–c29; see also *DKP* 361b11–362a2). Although there is considerable overlap in these passages with those pertaining to monks and laymen, certain qualities appear to be more readily ascribed to women, such as an excessive concern for personal adornment, spiteful and malicious gossip, jealousy, deceitfulness, superstition and fondness for non-Buddhist religious practices.

If we attempt to sum up our findings on the status of women as far as these early Mahāyāna *sūtras* are concerned, we must conclude that although women, both lay and renunciant, are included as recipients of the new teaching on a theoretically equal footing with men, they are generally represented in such an unfavourable light as to vitiate any notion of the Mahāyāna as a movement for sexual equality. Compared with the situation

in the Pāli Canon, in which women are at least as capable as men of attaining the highest goal, arhatship, the position of women in the Mahāyāna has hardly changed for the better, since women cannot attain buddhahood, and even the title of *bodhisattva* is withheld from them. Of course all this reflects the attitudes of the men (probably monks) who produced these texts, but this does not make the conclusion any less inescapable: although both men and women can ride in the Great Vehicle, only men are allowed to drive it.

Before we turn to the drivers and passengers of the "Small Vehicle", there is one other question we must deal with, that relating to the so-called "Celestial Bodhisattvas", Avalokiteśvara and the others, those compassionate agents of salvation who, according to some authorities, were provided by the Mahāyāna in response to the devotional needs of the masses. It has been suggested that these figures were called *mahāsattvas* ("Great Beings") to distinguish them from other *bodhisattvas*.<sup>12</sup> There is no evidence for such a distinction in our texts: *mahāsattva* (probably signifying "one whose aspiration or courage is great") is widely used together with *bodhisattva*, and is virtually a synonym for it (see *AsPP* 427b13-27 for a discussion of its meaning). The double expression *bodhisattva-mahāsattva* is employed with reference to householders, occurs interchangeably with "sons and daughters of good family", and is even used when the talk turns to *bodhisattvas* who fall into error (e.g., *AsPP* 444c2, 446c22ff.). Be that as it may, a few well-known *bodhisattvas* do make an appearance. The name Avalokiteśvara occurs only twice, in lists of *bodhisattvas* in the *CGD* and the *UP*, suggesting that for the writers of our texts he was a non-entity, but Mañjuśrī, on the other hand, appears in six texts, one of which, the *AjKV*, glorifies him in the most lavish terms. Given the heavy Perfection of Wisdom slant of most of these *sūtras*, this is not altogether surprising. The name of Maitreya also comes up fairly frequently. For all this, there is no evidence to suggest a widespread cult of the great *bodhisattvas*, and no passages recommend devotion to them. They function as symbols rather than as saviours. There is, however, evidence for the development of the cults of the Buddhas Amitābha and Akṣobhya by the late 2nd century C.E. Although the *Sukhāvāṭīvyūha* was not translated into Chinese until the middle of the 3rd century, the concept of rebirth in

the *buddhakṣetra* of Amitābha as a religious goal is found in the *PraS*, while the *AkTV* is entirely devoted to Akṣobhya and Abhirati. But as far as *bodhisattvas* are concerned the *initial* message of the Mahāyāna is clear: people should not worship *bodhisattvas*, they should become *bodhisattvas* themselves.<sup>13</sup>

We have seen something of how the identity of the different classes of Mahāyānists in relation to each other was defined. What we must now look at is how these people saw themselves as a group *vis-à-vis* other Buddhists. The first thing that strikes one when reading these early Mahāyāna *sūtras* is their extreme defensiveness. The texts fairly groan under the weight of their own self-glorification, and kalpas can tick by while one wades through chapter after chapter proclaiming the merits of this doctrine or that practice. This is not simply due to literary hyperbole, to that Indian device, in common use since the *Vedas*, of praising one thing—a god, a place, a spiritual discipline—by claiming that it is superior to all other things of that class put together. This is clearly present, and should be taken with the appropriate grain of salt. But there is more to it than that, and this is indicated by the numerous passages excoriating the detractors of the new teachings, usually portrayed as idle and perverse monks who, when they are not busy spreading base calumnies and lies about the Mahāyāna, are out breaking the precepts. That the Mahāyāna remained for a long time a minority movement in the land of its birth is confirmed by the well-known reports of Chinese pilgrims in India. In its infancy it was probably even more insignificant numerically, despite the astonishingly prolific literary creativity it gave rise to, and was therefore quite naturally on the defensive. But on the defensive against what, one might ask? Nowadays it is common practice to think of Buddhism as dividing into two schools or sects, Mahāyāna on one side and Hīnayāna, more properly a group of sects, on the other. The early *sūtras* provide no strong support for this view. True, the term *hīnayāna* is found, translated as *xiaodao*<sup>aj</sup> (“Small Way”), but it occurs only *four* times (*KP* 25; *DKP* 357a19; *AsPP* 426b6; *CGD* 455c15), and is thus even rarer than the term *mahāyāna*, which is itself of infrequent occurrence, as we have seen. Much more frequent are translations of the terms *śrāvakayāna* (“Vehicle of the Disciples”) and *pratyekabuddhayāna* (“Vehicle of the Solitary Buddhas”), or simply “Śrāvakas and

Pratyekabuddhas", which is even more common.

*Pratyekabuddha* is generally transcribed as *pizhifo*<sup>ak</sup>, but in several of our texts translations appear, e.g. *yinyuanjuefo*<sup>al</sup> in CGD 454b20 (implying *pratyayabuddha*) and *yuanyijue*<sup>am</sup> in AkTV 752a11, the latter meaning "by one(self) awakened". *Śrāvaka*, on the other hand, has the literal sense of "hearer", but the standard Chinese equivalent *shengwen*<sup>an</sup>, or "voice-hearer", seldom occurs in these early texts (e.g., DKP 351c20; AjKV 392b19). We find instead *dizi*<sup>ao</sup> ("disciple") or (a)*luohan*<sup>ap</sup>, a transcription of *arhat*. In fact, in the overwhelming majority of cases *śrāvaka* is rendered as *aluohan*, and *śrāvakayāna*, which occurs less frequently, as *aluohandao*<sup>aq</sup>, the "Way of the Arhats", a term which also does service for *arhattva* or *arhatphala*, the attainment of arhatship. I find this choice of words very significant. In his book *Buddhist Images of Human Perfection* (Delhi, 1982), Nathan Katz attempts to establish the essential identity of the *arhat* of the Pāli Canon and the *bodhisattva* of the Mahāyāna sūtras. In his concluding chapter he claims to have demonstrated that "the Mahāyāna texts speak in two distinct ways about the arhat. The first way of speaking is to show that the arhat is spiritually inferior to the bodhisattva; however, we have demonstrated that there is a conceptual distinction between the *śrāvaka* as one who thinks he has attained more than he actually has, and the true arhat. When speaking about the *śrāvaka* pejoratively, the standard context is in talk about meditation, and the *śrāvaka* is one who has mistakenly identified proficiency at meditation with *arahattā* itself . . . . The second way of speaking about the arhat in these early Mahāyāna texts is to identify the arhat with the bodhisattva" (Katz, 1982:275). Although I am in substantial agreement with Katz's overall thesis, and in general sympathy with any attempt to abolish imaginary discontinuities between the Mahāyāna and the Hīnayāna, I find that his conclusions in this particular respect rest on shaky ground, especially as regards the distinction he claims Mahāyāna sūtras make between *śrāvakas* and *arhats*. If our texts are anything to go by, there is no such distinction: by consistently rendering *śrāvaka* by *arhat*, Lokakṣema and his colleagues showed they were in no doubt that *śrāvakas* are both people who aspire to arhatship or *nirvāṇa* and people who actually attain that goal. Additional confirmation of this is furnished by the frequent appearance of well-

known historical *arhats*, the great *śrāvakas* Śāriputra, Mahāmaudgalyāyana and others, as representatives of the supposedly inferior or partial dispensation.

Nor is there any doubt that the level these venerable figures represent, that of the *arhats* and the *pratyekabuddhas* (note that the *pratyekabuddhas* are frequently subsumed under the *arhats*), is one that is to be transcended by the *bodhisattvas* (see e.g. *AjKV* 398b4-14). A hierarchy of attainments is in fact envisaged, leading from the state of an ordinary person (Skt. *prthagjana*, Chinese *fanren*<sup>ar</sup>) at the bottom, through those of a 'stream-winner' (*śrotāpanna*, *xutuohuan*<sup>as</sup>), a 'once-returner' (*sakṛdāgāmin*, *situohan*<sup>at</sup>), a 'non-returner' (*anāgāmin*, *anahan*<sup>au</sup>), an *arhat* and a *pratyekabuddha* to the state of a *buddha* or a *tathāgata* at the top (e.g. *DKP* 366b15-16; *AsPP* 429b4-c12).<sup>14</sup> In aiming for the top, *bodhisattvas*, aspirants to the full awakening of a *buddha*, are warned repeatedly not to fall back to the level of the *arhats*/*śrāvakas* and the *pratyekabuddhas* or to join their ranks, and such a regression is represented as a fearful misfortune (*DKP* 349c25-26, 350c7-11; *AkTV* 759a19-20, 760a11-12, 15-16; *AjKV* 391a19-20; *AsPP* 445b3-4, 447a14, 451b29-c22, 452a1ff.). This actually happens at one point in the *AsPP*, where 60 novice *bodhisattvas* attain arhatship despite themselves because they lack perfect wisdom and skill-in-means, in the same way that a giant bird without wings cannot help plummeting to earth from the top of Mt. Meru (*AsPP* 453c2-25). To avoid such a disaster, *bodhisattvas* must ensure that they are not contaminated by the attitudes of *arhats* and *pratyekabuddhas* (*DKP* 356b1-2, c9, 365a4-12; *AkTV* 761c25-26; *AjKV* 389c3; *AsPP* 460a2-4, 463c13-14; *PraS* 903c6), and they must resist the temptation to aspire to their goals, i.e., to opt for a premature *nirvāṇa*, to "achieve realisation midway" (*AkTV* 752a11; *AsPP* 448b25-28, 458c8-22, 459b5-10, 467a13ff.; *DKP* 350c11-14; *AjKV* 392c18ff.). The *śrāvakayāna* is characterised by attachment and limitation (*AjKV* 392b19-23), and those who opt for it do so primarily out of fear of *samsāra*, which renders them incapable of aspiring to buddhahood (*AjKV* 394c3ff.). Not only is their courage thus inferior to that of the *bodhisattvas*, but their wisdom is too (*KP* 78-79; *LAN* 751b20-21; *AsPP* 426b2, c19-20, 427b24, 462b17). Unlike the advanced *bodhisattvas*, they have not really overcome fear and attachment; for that reason the Great Śrāvakas and arhats



Mahākāśyapa, Śāriputra, Mahāmaudgalyāna and company are unable to resist the temptation to dance to the celestial music of King Druma; however, the novice *bodhisattvas* are equally helpless (*DKP* 351c8ff.). In another context, these great *Arhats* lament their own inferior attainments (*AjKV* 394c3-395b22). Therefore *bodhisattvas* are infinitely superior to *śrāvakas/arhats* and *pratyekabuddhas* (*KP* 80-85, 90; *AsPP* 468a27-28; *DKP* 365c22-28). Those who teach “the Bodhisattva Path” are one’s “good friends” (*kalyāṇa-mitra*), while those who direct one towards “the Paths of the Śrāvaka and the Pratyekabuddha” are “bad friends” (*pāpa-mitra*) (*KP* 13; *AsPP* 427b1-10; *DKP* 360a13-18).

Despite all this rather uncomplimentary material, however, the attitude displayed by these texts towards *arhats* is not entirely negative. Since *bodhisattvas* aspire to bring *nirvāṇa* to all sentient beings, it is not surprising that they should try to make a place for *arhats* in their picture of the world, even if it is not in the foreground. In most of our *sūtras* the great *śrāvakas*, the *bhikṣus* who were *arhats*, are present, and presumably they are not just there to act as figures of fun or to lend the proceedings an air of historical authenticity, even if these are important functions they sometimes perform. One has only to think, for example, of the role Subhūti plays in the *AsPP*. The followers of the *bodhisattva* way clearly had to face the fact that, despite all their polemics and hyperbole, they shared their membership of the *saṅgha* with people who continued to believe that arhatship was the ultimate goal of Buddhist practice, who sought their own liberation above all else, and who, as members of the *saṅgha*, were still worthy of respect (e.g. *UP* 16a5-12). Therefore, even in their idealised descriptions of the *buddhakṣetras*, and in the predictions (*vyākaraṇa*) which are scattered throughout these texts, they usually envisage the peaceful co-existence of *bodhisattvas* with *śrāvakas*. Although in the buddhafield Sadāvighuṣṭa (?) in the *AjKV* (397a8) there is only a *bodhisattva-saṅgha*, and in Druma’s world Candravimala in the *DKP* (362b19-21) “there are no other paths . . . only the host of *bodhisattvas*, all of the Mahāyāna” (see also *DKP* 363b9-10 for a similar case), in other instances *śrāvakas* are also present. For example, the *śrāvakas* of Akṣobhya’s world Abhirati are described at length (*AkTV* 756c24-758a15), and they share that world happily with

*bodhisattvas*. In fact, Abhirati teems with so many *arhats* that it is described as an *arhat-kṣetra* (*AkTV* 762c5-13), while both those who follow the Śrāvakayāna and those who follow the Bodhisattvayāna there are assured of freedom from molestation by Māra (*AkTV* 755a1-3, 758b15-21, 759b24-26; see also *AjKV* 393c24-27; *AsPP* 458a26-27, 469a20-21; and *CGD* 455a4 for further examples of co-existence). In a similar vein, most of our texts carry, at particular points in the narrative, descriptions of realisations attained by various members of the audience in response to the new teachings. In these the attainment of “stream-winning” and arhatship figures prominently (e.g., *DKP* 367a27-b1; *AjKV* 406a27-b1; *KP* 138, 145, 149; *AsPP* 451a12-15, 453b29-c3; *PraS* 919b18-22; *CGD* 454b2-7; *UP* 19b24-27).

Because of the general philosophical standpoint of the Perfection of Wisdom literature, one would expect to find in these early texts at least some acknowledgement of the purely conventional nature of the distinctions we have been talking about. The *AsPP*, for one, makes such an acknowledgement, conceding that all the grades of attainment from *śrotāpatti* to buddhahood partake of the same fundamental “suchness” (*tathatā*), in which there are no distinctions (450a4-8), that all these grades spring from the Perfection of Wisdom (451a17-24), and that in terms of “suchness” neither the three vehicles (of *śrāvakas*, *pratyekabuddhas* and *buddhas*) nor the one vehicle can be apprehended (454a18-29). Consequently *bodhisattvas* should not think of themselves as far from the attainments of *arhats* and *pratyekabuddhas* and close to buddhahood (466b13-c14).

For all that, distinctions *are* set up in these texts. The issues are extremely complex, and the evidence is equivocal, but not so equivocal as to support Katz’s contention that the much-maligned *śrāvakas* of these early Mahāyāna *sūtras* were merely conceited monks who mistook their own meditational attainments for final liberation, not full *arhats*—or his claim that *bodhisattvas* and *arhats* are essentially the same. This may in fact be so, but that is not what the texts say. What they do tell us is that the early adherents of the Bodhisattvayāna—who were probably very much in the minority—were prepared to go to great lengths to uphold their ideal against what they conceived to be the traditional goal of Buddhist practice, namely arhatship or *nirvāṇa* for oneself alone, but they were not prepared to write

off the rest of the Buddhist *saṅgha* or sever their own connection with it by the wholesale use of such terms as “Hīnayāna” and “Mahāyāna” as sectarian categories. It is interesting to compare this situation with that which currently obtains in Burma, a supposedly Theravādin country. In his *Buddhism and Society* (2nd ed., University of California Press, Berkeley, 1982), pp. 61-63, Melford Spiro notes the long tradition in Burma of aspiration to buddhahood, and the presence of a small number of people who, without bringing in any notions of Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna, refer to themselves as *hpaya laung* (“Embryo Buddhas”), i.e. *bodhisattvas*,<sup>15</sup> Can this be a distant echo of the state of affairs that once existed in India, before followers of “the Bodhisattva Path” started to cut themselves off from their fellow Buddhists, and before the distinction between the two ‘vehicles’ was anything more than a different perception of the goal of the religious life?

Turning now to other religious paths, we find that there is nothing unequivocal about the attitude displayed in these texts towards them. The usual designation for these paths is *waidao*<sup>av</sup>, “outside ways”, although *yudao*<sup>aw</sup> (“other ways”), *yidao*<sup>ax</sup> (“different ways”) and *xiedao*<sup>ay</sup> (“heretical ways”) are also found (as well as combinations of these, with or without *ren*<sup>az</sup> added), rendering a number of Sanskrit terms such as *lokāyata* (KP 5, 111), *drṣṭikṛta* (KP 18), *drṣṭigata* (KP 65, 109), *parappravādin* (KP 95), *anyatīrthya-parivṛājaka* (AsPP 433c21ff.) and so on. These non-Buddhist ways are not to be followed by the *bodhisattva* (DKP 356c7, 357a7-8; AjKV 398a22, 406a6; PraS 910c11, 912b29, 915a26, 916c7-8; UP 16a15-16), but rejected and overcome (DKP 357c4; PraS 911c5), their followers ideally being brought within the Buddhist fold (DKP 358c20-21, 359a25-28). Their defeat is often closely linked with the defeat of Māra (DKP 348c15, 362a17). Several *sūtras* go beyond these vague generalities, and urge followers of the Bodhisattvayāna not to sacrifice to or worship the gods, but go only to the Triple Gem for refuge (DKP 361b15-16; PraS 910c10-12; UP 17a20-21; AsPP 454b25-27, 455c9). However, only one text, the *WWP*, goes into any detail on any non-Buddhist religious practices—in this case brahmanical ritual (438a10ff.). The evidence is slim, but what there is suggests that the Bodhisattvayāna demanded that its adherents devote themselves exclusively to Buddhism, and regarded other faiths as beyond the pale.

Bringing all our findings together, we can make the following observations. The point of view presented in the earliest Chinese translations of Mahāyāna *sūtras* is most probably that of Mahāyānist *bhikṣus*. For this group *bodhisattvas* were certainly not just semi-mythical beings raised on high to receive the adoration of the masses, but real flesh-and-blood people, among whom they counted themselves, who had conceived the *bodhicitta*, the aspiration for awakening, and were pursuing the appropriate course of training either in the monastic context or in the household life. There is no sign at all of any cult of the "Celestial Bodhisattvas"; this was probably a later development. As far as these *bodhisattva-bhikṣus* were concerned, women were part of the movement, and the new teachings were addressed to them as well as to men. At the same time the texts reveal that women were not regarded as in all respects the spiritual equals of men. If this kind of attitude was enshrined in the *sūtras*, which, after all, embody the theories and ideals of the movement, it is hardly likely that in practice the women who followed the Mahāyāna fared any better than their Śrāvakayāna sisters. The Mahāyāna takes a hard line against other faiths, in theory at any rate, but its attitude to the rest of the Buddhist fold is characterised by ambivalence and defensiveness, and it gives every appearance of being a minority movement struggling to maintain the authenticity and validity of its teachings with a truly prodigious degree of polemical 'overkill'. It may well be the case that in its attack on the *arhat*-ideal the Mahāyāna was setting up a straw man, but this is not the place to decide whether the attainments of the *bodhisattvayānika* and the *śrāvakayānika* were essentially identical. Buddhahood may or may not be the same as arhatship, but it is certain that the followers of the Mahāyāna placed a higher premium on aspiration to it, which implies that they perceived a difference. What is equally certain is that Buddhism was (and still is) plagued by a problem. We could call it the problem of the "ever-receding ideal". In Gautama's own time, many hundreds of people attained arhatship like him. Four or five hundred years later, when the Buddha had grown idealised and remote, and *arhats* were few and far between, many people vowed to attain awakening, and thereby became *bodhisattvas*. One wonders how many centuries passed before even bodhisattvahood became as remote an ideal as buddhahood, and the goal had to be reformulated anew. Perhaps,

however, it is in the nature of religious systems not only to undergo continual transformation and renewal, but also to present us with ideals which are always just out of reach, with paradises that shimmer on the margins of possibility, and with vehicles which we know we could all ride to salvation, if only we could catch up with them and climb aboard.

## NOTES

1. See e.g., H. Dayal, *The Bodhisattva Doctrine in Buddhist Sanskrit Literature* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1932), pp. 45, 222-225; R. Robinson & W. Johnson, *The Buddhist Religion* (3rd ed., Wadsworth, Belmont, 1982), pp. 74-75; E. Conze, *Buddhism: Its Essence and Development* (Bruno Cassirer, Oxford, 1951), pp. 87-88, 120; D. Kalupahana, *Buddhist Philosophy* (University Press of Hawaii, Honolulu, 1976), pp. 121-126; N. Katz, *Buddhist Images of Human Perfection* (Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1982), p. 280.

2. This is the view of Dayal (see *Bodhisattva Doctrine*, pp. 31, 35), whose work has had a seminal effect on this area of study. Dayal's understanding of the *bodhisattva*-ideal is reflected in the writings of many other scholars. A particularly good example is T. Ling, *The Buddha* (Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1976), pp. 19-20:

Later on in India a form of Buddhism emerged, alongside the Theravada, which was characterised by beliefs in, and practices associated with, heavenly beings who possessed superhuman spiritual power, and who were known as Bodhisattvas . . . . In both senses of the word religion (belief in spiritual beings *and* belief in the sacred), the Bodhisattva school of Buddhism . . . was a religious system . . . . For Mahayana Buddhism the sacred has its special focus in the heavenly realm where dwell the Bodhisattvas, the superhuman spiritual beings who are said to exert their influence to help poor struggling mortals. In directing their attention to this supramundane heavenly community the Mahayanists showed themselves correspondingly less concerned with the need to order the earthly society of men in such a way that would facilitate the pursuit of the Buddhist life, and would enhance and encourage human effort. More reliance on heavenly power meant that less attention needed to be given to earthly factors. The Mahayanists became more concerned with devotions to the heavenly beings, with ritual and speculation, and less with the nature of the civilization in which they lived.

See also pp. 202-203, 242-247.

3. See E. Zürcher, "A New Look at the Earliest Chinese Buddhist Texts", an unpublished paper delivered at the Leiden Symposium on State, Ideology and Justice in Early Imperial China, 1-5 Sept., 1975, also his "Late Han Vernacular Elements in the Earliest Buddhist Translations", *Journal of the Chinese Language Teachers Association*, XII, 3 (Oct. 1977), pp. 177-203, to

both of which articles I am considerably indebted. See also my own unpublished paper “The Earliest Chinese Translations of Mahāyāna Buddhist Sūtras: Some Notes on the Works of Lokakṣema”.

4. T. = Takakusu Junjirō and Watanabe Kaikyoku, eds., *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō*, 100 vols. (Tokyo, 1924-35). Throughout this paper references to the texts will be to page, lateral column and line of the *Taishō* edition, except in the case of No. 8, the *Kāśyapa-parivarta*, where citations will be according to the sections of von Stäel-Holstein's edition.

5. On the epigraphical evidence, which tends to corroborate one of the findings of the present paper, see G. Schopen, “Mahāyāna in Indian Inscriptions”, *Indo-Iranian Journal*, 21 (1979) pp. 1-19.

6. These phonetic transcriptions (*biqiu biqiuni*, etc.), which later became standard in Chinese translations of Buddhist sūtras, are used throughout our group of texts, except that in Redaction B of the *PraS upāsaka* is also rendered as *qingxinshi*<sup>ba</sup> (“man of pure faith”) and *upāsikā* as *qingxinnü*<sup>bb</sup> (“woman of pure faith”), while non-standard translations of all four terms are found in *CGD* and *UP*.

7. Lokakṣema's use of *qiu* (“seek”) before his transcription of *mahāyāna-saṃprasthita* is redundant but revealing (since it puts women one step further back from full participation), otherwise the accuracy of his translation is confirmed by the Tibetan text of the *PraS*, 10A and 12A: *theg-pa chen-po-la yang-dag-par zhugs-pa'i dge-slong-ma* (or *dge-bsnyen-ma*).

8. On the use of these terms see D. Paul, *Women in Buddhism* (Asian Humanities Press, Berkeley, 1979), pp. 106-110.

9. In Chap. XIX of the Sanskrit text of the *AsPP* this figure appears as Gaṅgadevā or Gaṅgadevī Bhagini, i.e. “the woman Gaṅgadevī”. Although E. Conze in his English translation of the sūtra (*op. cit.*, pp. 219-221) calls her a ‘Goddess’ or ‘Goddess of the Ganges’, a lead which D. Paul follows in her version of the passage (*op. cit.*, pp. 180-184), this woman is no more a goddess than Āryadeva is a god. Gaṅgadevī's story, however, later produced some interesting echoes, when the *AsPP*'s prediction that she would attain awakening as a male was frustrated, as it were, by the Tibetan tradition. The *nam-thar* of Ye-shes mtsho-rgyal (757-817), one of the chief consorts of Padmasambhava, lists Gaṅgadevī as one of the previous incarnations of that famous Tibetan *yoginī*: see K. Dowman, *Sky Dancer* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1984), p. 6 and Tarthang Tulku, *Mother of Knowledge* (Dharma Publishing, Berkeley, 1983), p. 11 (both translators appear to perpetuate the erroneous divinisation, but I have not been able to check the Tibetan text myself). Since Ye-shes mtsho-rgyal is similarly identified with the unnamed merchant's daughter who befriends the *bodhisattva* Sadāprarudita in Chaps. XXX-XXXI of the *AsPP*, the author of the *nam-thar* is clearly attempting to link her with Prajñāpāramitā herself.

10. See *AsPP* 427b29-c2, c27, 429b6-7 for occurrences of this term with *bodhisattva* and *mahāsaṃnāha-saṃnaddha*.

11. On this general theme see N. Schuster, “Changing the Female Body: Wise Women and the Bodhisattva Career in Some *Mahāratnakūṭa Sūtras*”, *JIABS*, 4, 1 (1981), pp. 24-69.

12. See e.g., Robinson and Johnson, *op.cit.*, p. 78.

13. This point is, in my view, not invalidated by the existence of such passages as *KP* 88, which claims that just as the new moon is more worthy of homage (*namaskāra*) than the full, so too *bodhisattvas* are more worthy of homage than the Buddhas. When taken in context, this hyperbolic glorification of the *bodhisattva*-path can hardly be construed as a 'call to worship'.

14. For different renderings of some of these grades, see *UP* 16a6-8.

15. Spiro's understanding of the *bodhisattva*-ideal as one which "permits salvation to be achieved by a mechanical process—the transfer of merit from Bodhisattva to devotee" and "demands no personality transformation" (*op.cit.*, p. 62) is, as we have seen, wide of the mark, at least as far as the early Mahāyāna is concerned. The supposed "misreadings" of the *bodhisattva* doctrine which he imputes to the Burmese (see esp. p. 63, n. 33) are perfectly compatible with our early *sūtras*.

### CHINESE GLOSSARY

a. 道行般若經  
b. 般若三昧經  
c. 他真陀羅所問如來三昧經  
d. 阿闍世王經  
e. 兜沙經  
f. 內藏百寶經  
g. 文殊師利問菩薩署經  
h. 遺日摩尼寶經  
i. 阿閼佛國經  
j. 成具光明定意經  
k. 法鏡經  
l. 摩訶衍  
m. 大道  
n. 菩薩道  
o. 行菩薩道者  
p. 行(求)菩薩道者  
q. 菩薩  
r. 闍士  
s. 明士  
t. 四輩弟子  
u. 四部弟子  
v. 比丘比丘尼優婆塞優婆夷  
w. 菩薩棄愛欲作比丘  
x. 比丘尼求摩訶衍三拔致  
y. 白衣菩薩居家修道  
z. 優婆夷求摩訶衍三拔致  
aa. 比丘菩薩

ab. 闍士去家為(修)道  
ac. 明士除惡  
ad. 去家  
ae. 在家  
af. 居家  
ag. 白衣  
ah. 善男子善女人  
ai. 恒竭  
aj. 小道  
ak. 辟支佛  
al. 因緣覺佛  
am. 緣一覺  
an. 聲聞  
ao. 弟子  
ap. (阿)羅漢  
aq. 阿羅漢道  
ar. 凡人  
as. 須陀洹  
at. 斯陀含  
au. 阿那含  
av. 外道  
aw. 餘道  
ax. 異道  
ay. 邪道  
az. 人  
ba. 清信士  
bb. 清信女