

**The Evolution of the Concept of the Buddha  
from Early Buddhism to the Formulation of  
the Trikāya Theory**

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## Abstract

Of the three bodies of the Buddha, the *saṃbhogakāya* was the last to have been formulated (circa. the third to fourth century CE) To date, scholars have not established any substantiated theory with regard to its origins. It is with this aim that I began my research on the subject.

In earliest Buddhist literature, the concept of the Buddha reveals two aspects: a human identity and a superhuman character. The rationalist Sarvāstivādins developed their belief in the human Buddha while the Mahāsāṃghikas relied more on pure faith and developed their concept of the transcendental Buddha endowed with superhuman qualities. It is on this basis that the two-body theory of the Buddha was formulated. Most probably the originator belongs to the Sarvāstivāda school and flourished before the composition of the *Mahāprajñāpāramitā-sāstra*. From the fourth chapter onwards, I have traced the origins and developments of each of the three bodies. The concept of the *dharmakāya*, derived from the Buddha's teachings collected in the corpus of early Buddhist literature, was further developed as a collection of pure dharmas by the Sarvāstivādins. It finally evolved into the cosmic body, an impersonal principle supporting all phenomena through its identification with the *tathatā* which pervades the whole universe in Mahāyāna Buddhism. It is on this basis that the Mahāyānists identified the *dharmakāya* with other key concepts such as the *Buddhadhātu* and the *Tathāgatagarbha*.

The *saṃbhogakāya* theory arose as a result of the debate on the *rūpakāya* of the Buddha. Initially, the Sarvāstivādins and the Mahāsāṃghikas debated on the transcendental qualities of the Buddha. This later led to the problem of the short lifespan of Śākyamuni when Mahāyānists increasingly emphasized the great merit of the Buddha gained through bodhisattva practice. The formulation of the *saṃbhogakāya* was arguably a solution to this complex problem, basing itself as precedent on the teachings of the early and middle Mahāyāna *sūtras*.

The *nirmāṇakāya* doctrine originated from the early Buddhist theory of the mind-made body produced through the supernatural power of *ṛddhi*. It had probably first been conceived by the Mahāsāṃghikas when they idealised the Buddha as transcendental. The Mahāyānists accepted this concept in its entirety and further developed it into that of the *nirmāṇakāya*. Many scholars think that the development of the concept of the Buddha is mainly driven by faith in Gautama, but our study of the subject shows that philosophical thought also plays a very important role.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

*	Indication of a reconstructed Sanskrit title from an ancient Chinese translation of Buddhist text whenever the original Sanskrit is lost.
A	<i>Aṅguttaranikāya</i>
<i>Aṣṭa</i>	<i>Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitāsūtra</i>
<i>Avataṃsaka</i>	<i>Buddhāvataṃsaka-mahāvaiṣṭya-sūtra</i>
BCE	Before Common Era
CE	Common Era
D	<i>Dīghanikāya</i>
Dhp	<i>Dhammapada</i>
DPPN	<i>Dictionary of Pāli Proper Names</i> , edited by Malalasekera
<i>Kośa</i>	<i>Abhidharmakośabhāṣya</i> of Vasubandhu
M	<i>Majjhimanikāya</i>
Miln	<i>Milindapañha</i>
MMPS	Mahāyāna <i>Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra</i>
MPPŚ	* <i>Mahāprajñāpāramitāsāstra</i> attributed to Nāgārjuna
MS	<i>Mahāyānasamgraha</i> of Asaṅga
MSA	<i>Mahāyānasūtrālamkāra</i> of Asaṅga
Pts	<i>Paṭisambhidāmagga</i>
PTS	The Pali Text Society
S	<i>Saṃyuttanikāya</i>
T	<i>Taisho Shinshu Daizokyo</i>
tr.	translation
<i>Vibhāṣā</i>	* <i>Mahāvibhāṣāsāstra</i>
Vsm	<i>Visuddhimagga</i>

## INTRODUCTION

### 1. The Purpose of the Research

The *trikāya* theory is one of the most important and fundamental doctrinal developments of Mahāyāna Buddhism. The concepts of the *dharmakāya* and the *nirmāṇakāya* are already present in early Buddhism although the latter concept was expounded in a different form of *rūpakāya* that conveys different implications. The concept of the *saṃbhogakāya*, however, appeared much later. The Buddha worshipped by the Mahāyānist followers is an omnipotent divinity endowed with numerous supernatural attributes and qualities. This Buddha is none other than the *saṃbhogakāya*. How and why the concept of the *saṃbhogakāya* came into being is of great interest to the present writer because it is only with the advent of this concept that the *trikāya* theory came into existence. Besides, this question is closely related to a number of other questions. What position does the historical Buddha hold in Mahāyāna if they worship an almighty Buddha? How is this historical Buddha related to the *dharmakāya*?

Despite the importance of the *trikāya* theory, there is no comprehensive study in the development of the concept of the Buddha from early Buddhism to the formulation of this theory. Systematic research on the issue began at the beginning of the last century with de La Vallée Poussin (1906) and Chizen Akanuma (1922), who were the first to deal with this complex subject.<sup>1</sup> Their studies contributed significantly to the knowledge of the most salient features of this doctrine. However, these are primarily surveys that have merely provided a picture of the final form of the doctrine. In these works the development of the notion of the Buddha was not extensively traced.

Nagao Gadjin (1973) has made an excellent study of the subject and noted several important points.<sup>2</sup> According to him, the *saṃbhogakāya* is composed of a twofold character: the aspect of transcending the human Buddha with the theory of

the *nirmāṇakāya* and the concretization of the absolute with the theory of the *dharmakāya*. Thus the *saṃbhogakāya* occupies a central position in the *trikāya* doctrine. The soteriological power of the Buddha is developed in conjunction with this double character. It was beyond the scope of Nagao's research, however, to trace the origin and development of the *trikāya* theory.

Nalinaksha Dutt (1978) has devoted a chapter on the conception of *kāya* in his work entitled *Mahāyāna Buddhism*.<sup>3</sup> Unlike the scholars mentioned above, Dutt's discussion of the concept of *kāya* covers studies of the *Nikāyas* and the early Indian Buddhist schools. His discussion on the *kāya* concept in the *Nikāyas* is significant on account of the collection and analysis of all relevant passages concerning the subject. He points out that the conception of *kāya* in the *Nikāyas* has no metaphysical or doctrinal implications, but pertains rather, to a realistic concept of the Buddha. His discussion on the concept of the Buddha in the early Indian Buddhist schools and the three bodies of Mahāyāna Buddhism still largely remains a survey.

S. Takeuchi's (1983) study of the Buddha bodies focuses primarily on Mahāyāna *sūtras*, particularly Yogācāra works.<sup>4</sup> Besides outlining the importance of the concept of the *saṃbhogakāya*, he dedicates a section of his article to a discussion of the origin of the concept. Takeuchi asserts that the *saṃbhogakāya* is closely connected with the bodhisattva ideal. Its key aspect is the vow that a bodhisattva takes at the beginning of spiritual training, which persists until the attainment of Buddhahood. In this connection, the *Sukhāvātīvyūhasūtra*, one of the earliest Mahāyāna texts, plays an important role as Amitābha Buddha is generally considered a *saṃbhogakāya*. However, the actual origin and development of the concept remains unanswered.

A recent study on the three bodies was conducted by John Makransky (1997) who concentrated primarily on the discussion of the controversies of interpretation on Buddha bodies in India and Tibet.<sup>5</sup> Although he has also devoted two chapters to the concept of the Buddha in the Sarvāstivādin *Abhidharma* and the *Prajñāpāramitāsūtras*, the chapters do not surpass the role of survey. It was beyond

the scope of Makransky's research to trace the development of the three bodies prior to their formulation since his concern is the controversy over the *Abhisamayālaṅkāra* on Buddhahood, which is a piece of work written after the formulation of the *trikāya* theory.

With the exception of Makransky, who has conducted a book length study on the three bodies, other scholars mentioned previously have only written either articles or single chapters on this topic. There is no comprehensive study explaining how, why and when the three-body theory was formulated. The present study is an attempt to trace the development of the concept of the Buddha as a human teacher and guide in early Buddhism, up to the formulation of the three-body theory. Special emphasis will be extended to the following questions. Firstly, how and why the Mahāsāṃghikas conceived of a transcendental Buddha and what the doctrinal foundations for such a concept were. Secondly, the origin of the notion of the *dharmakāya* and its development in Mahāyāna thought will be discussed, by extension showing how and when it became an ontological truth and cosmic body. Thirdly, the origin of the *saṃbhogakāya* will be studied, along with discussion on what problems such a concept was intended to solve, granted such problems existed.

## 2. The Method of the Research

In this study the present writer will rely chiefly on primary sources such as the early and middle Mahāyāna *sūtras* and *śāstras* in Chinese translation, for most original Sanskrit texts are lost. The development of the concept of the Buddha will be traced from a historical perspective and translations and interpretations of the relevant passages in these *sūtras* are also provided by the writer. Furthermore, an attempt will be made on an interpretation of the hermeneutics the Mahāyāna authors intended to convey.

First of all, the term "the early and middle Mahāyāna *sūtras* and *śāstras*" requires some explanations. As a working premise, the history of Mahāyāna is

divided into three periods. The first period is from the first century CE or even the first century BCE to the fourth century CE, before the time of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu. This is considered a period of the rise and formation of Mahāyāna Buddhism, because Mahāyāna *sūtras* were already in existence in the first century CE, as indicated by the translation of the *Aṣṭa* into Chinese in the second century CE.<sup>6</sup> Scholars such as Conze think that the basic *Prajñāpāramitā* probably dates back to the first century BCE.<sup>7</sup> It seems that by the fourth century, Mahāyāna Buddhism was already a prominent school since eminent personages such as Asaṅga and Vasubandhu were converted at this time into the new faith from the Sarvāstivāda school. This will be discussed in chapter five. Moreover, Kumārajīva (active in China between 402 and 413) translated a lot of Mahāyāna *sūtras* and *śāstras* at the beginning of fifth century, such as *\*Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā* and *Mādhyamikaśāstra*.

The second period is from the fourth century CE, the time of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu, to the sixth century CE. This is a period of the development of Mahāyāna as different schools, such as the Mādhyamika and the Yogācāra as well as the *tathāgatagarbha* thought emerged and matured.

The third period is from the seventh century onwards, the beginning of Tantrayāna to the disappearance of Buddhism in India.

The present research mainly focuses on the first and second periods of Mahāyāna Buddhism, with the emphasis is on the first. It is a well-known fact that to date the Mahāyāna *sūtras* is next to impossible. Hence, the dates of the Chinese translations are used as a working hypothesis except in the case where there are already scholarly established dates, which are extremely rare.<sup>8</sup> There are two reasons for employing this method. First, it is obvious that the dates of the Chinese translations of the Mahāyāna *sūtras* are the only dates we know for historical research. Second, the dates of the Chinese translations of these *sūtras* and *śāstras* are not at all without an order for us to follow, but they roughly correspond to the development of the Mahāyāna *sūtras* in India. An analysis of the Chinese



translations of the Mahāyāna *sūtras* and *śāstras* used in the present thesis supports this assertion. In this analysis, representative translators and their translations have been chosen. For a brief outline of the chronology of the Chinese translations of the Mahāyāna *sūtras* and *śāstras*, please see appendix II.

First, we start with Lokakṣema (active in China in 178-189 CE) who is one of the earliest translators. His translations are mostly early Mahāyāna *sūtras* such as the *Daoxingbanruojing* (道行般若經 the oldest extant version of the *Aṣṭa*) and the *\*Akṣobhyatathāgatasyavyūhasūtra*. He is followed by Zhi Qian (222-280) whose translations are also early Mahāyāna *sūtras* such as the *Damingdujing* (大明度經 another translation of the *Aṣṭa*), and the *\*Vimalakīrtinirdeśasūtra* as well as Avadāna literature. But with the translations of Dharmarakṣa (266-313), the emphasis has been changed and the soteriology of the Buddha is stressed and praised. These include the *\*Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā* (光讚經), the *Dushipin-jing* and the *Rulaixingxian-jing*. This will be discussed in chapter four. Thus, with Mokṣala's translation of another version of the *\*Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā* (放光般若經) in 291, there arose a great interest in studying the *Prajñāpāramitāsūtras* in China and subsequently, different groups came into existence known as the Six Houses and Seven Schools.<sup>9</sup> This period is named 'the ancient translation' in China and corresponds to the first period of Mahāyāna Buddhism.

Kumārajīva (402-413) is a prominent person in Chinese Buddhism because his translations are lucid and easy to read and he also translated a large number of Indian works. Most of his translations belong to the Mādhyamika, especially works of Nāgārjuna, such as the controversial *\*Mahāprajñāpāramitāśāstra* the *\*Daśabhūmikavibhāṣāśāstra* and the *Prajñāpāramitāsūtras*, as a result of which the Mādhyamika school was introduced into China. At the same time, Buddhahadra (410-421), a contemporary of Kumārajīva, translated among other *sūtras* the *\*Avataṃsaka* which praises the powers and qualities of the Buddhas as Dharmarakṣa's translations did, and the *\*Mahāvaiṣṭyaparyatathāgatagarbhasūtra* which

introduces a new branch of learning, the *tathāgatagarbha*. But it is the \**Sandhinirmocanasūtra* in the translations of Bodhiruci (508-535) that marks the appearance of the Yogācāra thought in China. From then on, more works on Yogācāra thought were translated by Paramārtha (546-569), such as the *Mahāyānasamgraha* and the \**Buddhagotraśāstra*. This shows that Yogācāra as a school was already established in India at this time. This corresponds to the second period of Mahāyāna Buddhism.

Xuanzang (645-664) is another major figure in Chinese Buddhism who translated volumes of works, mainly Yogācāra treatises such as the \**Mahāyānasamgrahabhāṣya*, the \**Yogācārabhūmiśāstra* and the \**Vijñāptimātratāsiddhiśāstra* as well as the seven Abhidharma works of the Sarvāstivāda. The Yogācāra school was thus introduced and established in China. A little later, Yijing (695-713) translated many vinaya works of the Mūlasarvāstivāda. This probably indicates that the Sarvāstivāda still existed in India at this time and it further split and gave rise to a new school, the Mūlasarvāstivāda. This brief analysis of the history of Chinese translations suggests that it roughly reflects the development of Indian Buddhist thought.

Second, another problem concerning Mahāyāna *sūtras* is that they are constantly subject to growth and additions. It is interesting to note that the later Chinese translation of a *sūtra* or a *śāstra* is usually longer and larger than the early translation of the same text. The *Vibhāṣā* is a very good example. There are three Chinese translations of this text and the first translation made by Saṅghabhūti is much shorter than Xuanzang's translation which is the third. This will be discussed in detail in chapter two. However, in the present study of the early Indian Buddhist Schools, Xuanzang's translation of the *Vibhāṣā* is used for the following two reasons. Firstly, the first two translations in existence are only partial of the original texts. According to the preface written by Daoan (道安 312-385 CE), a contemporary of Saṅghabhūti, the treatise was originally much larger, but the oral transmitter of the

text forgot parts of it so that only forty discussions had been translated.<sup>10</sup> The second extant translation by Buddhavarma is also a partial one. It was originally in one hundred fascicules, but due to unrest in the area where the translation was being conducted, forty fascicules were lost and only sixty have survived. But Xuanzang's translation, though very late, is a complete text. Second, the early Indian Buddhist Schools, mainly the Sarvāstivāda and the Mahāsāṃghika, did not disappear after the rise of Mahāyāna Buddhism. Instead, they survived for several centuries and the Theravāda exists even today. In fact, the Sarvāstivāda even further developed and gave rise to the Mūlasarvāstivāda. The evidence is that Yijing translated a large number of Vinaya texts of the Mūlasarvāstivāda as discussed above. Furthermore, these schools, especially the Sarvāstivādins, debated with the Mahāyānists and even rejected their concept of the Buddha. This will be discussed in chapter five. Therefore, it is only in Xuanzang's complete translation of the *Vibhāṣā* that we can obtain a full picture of the concept of the Buddha of the Sarvāstivāda.

Third, in the analysis of some philosophical passages in the ancient texts, later translations have been used to illustrate the earlier ones. This is particularly useful in the case of Lokakṣema's translation of the *Aṣṭa*, because some of its passages are not intelligible while the identical passages in Kumārajīva's translation of the same text are explicit. This method helps us to understand and interpret the corrupted passages in the ancient texts, which are important in our research of the development of Mahāyāna ideas and thoughts although they might have slightly changed over the course of time. However, this method has been adopted to interpret only the identical passages, not the passages that have been added and considerably revised in later translations to avoid misinterpretation.

Fourth, since the emphasis of the thesis is on the Mahāyāna development of the concept of the Buddha and the sources utilized are mainly Mahāyāna *sūtras*, the *Nikāya* and the *Āgama* sources are taken as the earliest Buddhist literature without delving into detailed analysis of the substrata of these *sūtras*. However, the Pāli

*Nikāyas* are always used as the prime source in the discussions of early Buddhism. The Chinese *Āgamas* are only used as supporting evidence because they have been revised and changed over the course of time by the early Indian Buddhist schools and even the early Mahāyānists. This point will be further discussed in detail in chapter two. Thus, the Pāli *Nikāya* sources are always mentioned first as evidence and then followed by the Chinese *Āgama* sources.

One may think that the Pāli *Nikāyas* also belong to a particular school namely the Theravāda and as such they may not be representative of the earliest strata in the Buddhist literature. Although this may be true, yet when compared with the Chinese *Āgamas*, the Pāli *Nikāyas* are still less corrupted. Moreover, the latter is in its original language while the former is in a translated form. The Chinese *Āgamas*, according to scholars, were translated from Sanskrit not Pāli. Gautama Buddha very explicitly told his disciples that they should learn his teaching in their own languages, not to translate it into the refined Sanskrit.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, the original Sanskrit *Āgamas* from which the Chinese translations were made were initially translated texts, while the Pāli *Nikāyas* are in its original language notwithstanding controversies concerning whether the Pāli was the language of the original proto-canon. Thus, it is justified to use the Pāli *Nikāyas* as a prime source for the study of early Buddhism.

Since both the Pāli *Nikāyas* and the Chinese *Āgamas* are used in the present thesis as primary sources, Pāli terminologies are used when Pāli sources are consulted. Otherwise, Sanskrit terminologies are used throughout the entire dissertation because the main sources are Mahāyāna *sūtras* in Chinese translations of the Sanskrit originals. Almost all the English translations of passages taken from the Chinese sources and used as evidence for discussion are mine unless stated.

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<sup>1</sup> Louis de La Vallée Poussin (1906), 'Studies in Buddhist Dogma: The Three Bodies of the Buddha (Trikāya)'. *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* for 1906, pp. 943-977. Chizen Akanuma (1922), 'The Triple Body of the Buddha'. *Eastern Buddhist*, vol. 2, pp.1-29.

<sup>2</sup> Nagao Gadjin (1973), 'On the Theory of Buddha-body (Buddhakāya)'. *Eastern*

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*Buddhist*, vol. 6, No. 1. pp.25-53.

<sup>3</sup> Nalinaksha Dutt (1978), *Mahāyāna Buddhism*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.

<sup>4</sup> Takeuchi Shiyokou, (1983), 'Buddhakan no hensen'. In Akira Hirakawa, ed., *Daijō Bukkyō*, Vol. I, Tokyo: Shunjusha, pp.166-170.

<sup>5</sup> John Makransky (1997) *Buddhahood Embodied: Sources of Controversy in India and Tibet*. New York: State University of New York Press.

<sup>6</sup> Nāgārjuna is traditionally considered the founder of Mahāyāna Buddhism. Thus, Mahāyāna arose in the second century CE according to tradition.

<sup>7</sup> Edward Conze (1960a), 9. Masao Shizutani, basing himself chiefly on epigraphical records and the dates of the Chinese translations of Mahāyāna *sūtras*, made a proposal that proto-Mahāyāna in its incipient was during the time of 100 to 1 BCE.

<sup>8</sup> Japanese scholars such as Masao Shizutani have also used the dates of Chinese translations in their studies of the development of Mahāyāna *sūtras*. Cited from Nakamura Hajime (1996), 152.

<sup>9</sup> See Kenneth Ch'en (1972), 60.

<sup>10</sup> T55, 73c.

<sup>11</sup> T24. 822a; 232b-c; T22. 955a; 174b; T23. 274a; Pāli Vinaya, II. 139.

## Chapter One

### The Dual Identity of the Buddha in Early Buddhism<sup>1</sup>

In the earliest Buddhist literature, namely the Pāli *Nikāyas* and the Chinese *Āgamas*, the Buddha is portrayed in two aspects: the human identity and the superhuman, supernormal character. Through the first aspect the Buddha is seen to have constantly interacted with his disciples as well as other religious groups of his time. Through the second aspect, the Buddha is seen as an object of religious worship for his followers, a saviour of the world.<sup>2</sup> These two aspects intermingle to an extent that it is extremely difficult to separate one from the other without doing injustice to the concept as a whole. More rationalist Buddhist scholars attempt to minimize the “irrational” by claiming that the occurrence of miracles in Buddhist literature was due to apocryphal accretion and interpolation. At the same time, some early Western Buddhist scholars may have overstated the superhuman character of the Buddha, asserting that it was simply a solar myth.<sup>3</sup> After vigorous research into both literary and archaeological sources, most Buddhist scholars today accept the historicity of Gautama Buddha. However, the superhuman and supernormal elements of the Buddha may have co-existed from the very beginning of Buddhist literature or even during Gautama’s lifetime. It is problematic thus to simply dismiss any of those outright, because all the miracles performed by Gautama as mentioned in the *sūtras* are within six modes of higher knowledge which, according to early Buddhism, can be attained through meditation. According to the *sūtras*, Gautama confidently believed this to be so. One may even find modern scholars such as Gokhale asserting that such miracles are possible when the mind becomes concentrated and clear through the practice of meditation.<sup>4</sup> These two aspects of the Buddha may have existed side by side from the inception of Buddhism, and have served as a foundation for the later development of the concept of the Buddha. In this chapter, these two aspects form the subject of inquiry.

## 1. The Human Buddha

The human identity of the Buddha is manifested in the difficulties that he encountered during his lifetime, although they are deeply embedded in legends and mythology. Such examples are his illnesses, his emotions, the troubles within his own community of monks, and his being assaulted and slandered by his enemies. These accounts clearly point to a vivid historical personage who walked on Indian soil as leader of a religious tradition.

### 1. *Human and Physiological Elements*

The Buddha was physically like any other human being, subject to the law of nature that made him vulnerable to fatigue, illness, aging, decay and death as described in the *sūtras*. Instances of the Buddha's illnesses are not rare in the *sūtras*, which describe him as suffering constantly from back pain and stomach troubles.<sup>5</sup> Both the Pāli and the Chinese versions of the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* mention two typical examples of the Buddha's illness which eventually led to his death.<sup>6</sup> The Pāli commentaries explain that the Buddha suffered backache in old age owing to the severe austerities practised during the six years preceding his enlightenment,<sup>7</sup> and the unsuitable meals taken during that period were responsible for dyspepsia that persisted throughout his life, culminating in his last serious illness of dysentery.<sup>8</sup> It is because of all these physical troubles that the Buddha had to consult Jīvaka, the royal physician of king Bimbisāra.<sup>9</sup> This also is referred to in the *Milindapañha*.<sup>10</sup>

The Buddha, like any other human being, also slept during the night and ate food in the daytime. This is mentioned in many places in the canon. In order to illustrate this point, we shall cite one example from the *Udāna*.<sup>11</sup> A bhikkhu named Soṇa, who had never seen the Buddha, once came to visit him and spent a night in his company. This monk witnessed what the Buddha had done during that night. The Buddha is described as having spent much of the night in the open meditating and was known to

wash his feet before retiring. At dawn the following morning, he got up and meditated again.<sup>12</sup> This sort of ablution, as a very common practice in the life of an ordinary human being in those times shows the human side of Gautama Buddha.

The *Samyuttanikāya* mentions that when the Buddha was old, Ānanda noticed a great change in his physiology. His limbs had become slack and wrinkled, his body bent forward, and a change was to be seen in his sense-faculties too.<sup>13</sup> In the *Mahāparinibbānasutta*, the Buddha told Ānanda: “I too, Ānanda, am now old, and full of years, my journey is drawing to its close, I have reached my sum of days, I am turning eighty years of age; and just as a worn-out cart, Ānanda, can be kept going only with the help of thongs, so methinks, the body of the Tathāgata can only be kept going by repairs.”<sup>14</sup> So the body of the Buddha, just as that of any other human being, became weak when he grew old. It was due to all these factors that during his old age Gautama Buddha had to ask Ānanda to become his permanent attendant, the duties of which Ānanda performed with a loving heart and strong faith for twenty-five years.<sup>15</sup> In his last days, the Buddha’s strength quickly ebbed away after his last meal, and according to the Pāli commentary, he had to stop at twenty-five places while travelling three *gāvutas* (approximately eight to twelve miles) from Pāvā to Kusināra where he finally passed away.<sup>16</sup>

## 2. Troubles Confronted by the Buddha

No matter how great a religious founder and teacher Gautama Buddha had been as described in Buddhist literature, he was not able to completely influence every single individual he had conversed with. He had opponents within his own community of monks such as the well-known Devadatta, who even challenged his authority as the leader of the Saṃgha and plotted against his life.<sup>17</sup>

The *vinaya* frequently mentions a group of monks called Chabbaggiyas<sup>18</sup> as being guilty of various *vinaya* offences. They were known to have attempted to exploit loopholes in the community regulations.<sup>19</sup> They had led the Buddha to



institutionalise many rules concerning the life of a recluse. Assaji, Punabbasu, Paṇḍuka, Lohitaka, Mettiya and Bhummaja were the leaders of the Chabbaggiyas, and are sometimes referred to in scriptures as ‘the six groups’ notorious for their misconduct. There were also nuns among their followers, such as Mettiyā,<sup>20</sup> who likewise had violated the *vinaya* rules in various ways.<sup>21</sup> A serious dispute on *vinaya* rules among the Kauśāmbī (Pāli: Kosambī) monks is also found, an incident that could not even be solved by the Buddha, who could only go away.<sup>22</sup> Therefore, during the Buddha’s old age, Kāśyapa complained that it was difficult to speak to the monks for they were intractable and heedless of instructions.<sup>23</sup> He told the Buddha that “formerly there were both fewer precepts and more bhikkhus established as arhats (Pāli: arahat), but now there are more precepts and fewer bhikkhus established as arhats.”<sup>24</sup> Even the Buddha could not do anything to prevent it but said that his teaching would disappear from the world one day in the future.

Some of the Buddha’s disciples were dissatisfied with either his teaching or the Buddha himself and left his Order, with some returning to lay life and others joining other *śrāmaṇa* groups.<sup>25</sup> Phagguna Bhikkhu was one who was dissatisfied when the Buddha admonished him for misconduct. On another occasion, he put a series of questions to the Buddha who rejected them as wrongly formulated.<sup>26</sup> Later it was reported that Phagguna returned to lay life.<sup>27</sup> In a similar case, Ariṭṭha was reported to have held a pernicious view and the Buddha rebuked him. As he did not want to give up his view, he returned to lay life when an act of suspension was brought against him.<sup>28</sup> Sunakkhatta, who once was a personal attendant of the Buddha, became dissatisfied and left the Order because the Buddha did not perform any miracles for him or explain the beginning of the world to him.<sup>29</sup>

Some people were attracted by Gautama Buddha and had interesting conversations with him, yet they were not converted because they were suspicious of his claim to enlightenment. On his way to Benares right after his enlightenment, Gautama Buddha met the Ājīvaka Upaka, who inquired about his teacher and his

Dharma. Gautama Buddha then told him that he had no teacher and he himself was the supreme teacher, the Fully Enlightened One. However, Upaka, the very first person the Buddha met after his enlightenment, shaking his head, went away without being converted.<sup>30</sup> Doṇa, the Brahmin, conversed with Gautama on his identity as to whether he was a deva, a gandharva, a yakṣa, or a human being. Gautama declared that he was none other than the Buddha because he destroyed the *kleśas*, the causes to be born as all these kinds of beings. Doṇa, however, was not convinced and went away.<sup>31</sup> This shows that both Upaka and Doṇa exhibited a thoroughly skeptical attitude towards Gautama's claim to full enlightenment as they both went off without being converted. Just as Naughton states, this reaction seems a very natural one.<sup>32</sup> The fact that the Pāli suttas portray Gautama Buddha directly after his enlightenment in such an uncomplimentary way is probably good evidence for the authenticity of such an attitude. No later redactor would be likely to fabricate such a story. Similar incidents are also mentioned in the *Majjhimanikāya* where it is said that although the wanderer Udāyin had conversed with Gautama Buddha on several occasions, he was still not converted.<sup>33</sup> Daṇḍapāṇi, a Śākya who met the Buddha at Kapilavastu, was also not converted despite the fact that they had an interesting conversation.<sup>34</sup> According to the *Majjhimanikāya* commentary, Daṇḍapāṇi sided with Devadatta, the Buddha's arch foe, and his manner of asking questions was therefore arrogant and deliberately provocative.<sup>35</sup>

According to the *Samyuttanikāya*, Gautama Buddha encountered other troubles in addition to the incidents mentioned above. He was once refused alms food and had to return with an empty bowl when he went to the Brahmin village, Pañcasālā.<sup>36</sup> The *Dhammapada* commentary explains that he actually starved for one day at this village, because none of the inhabitants was willing to offer him alms.<sup>37</sup> The *Vinaya* mentions that Gautama was even criticised by the people of Rājagṛha for making women childless and widows because a lot of people went forth and renounced the world.<sup>38</sup> Most of the discourses delivered by the Buddha were received by the audience with

delight. Evidence is found at the end of many *sūtras* with the statement that “the bhikṣus are delighted at and accept the Buddha’s discourse.” However, not all the discourses delivered by Gautama Buddha were happily accepted by his disciples, one example of which is the Pāli *Mūlapariyāyasutta*. When Gautama Buddha delivered this discourse, “the Bhikkhus did not delight in the Blessed One’s words.”<sup>39</sup> All these incidents show that the Buddha was not divine but a human being that had to face all the possible troubles of a leader.

### 3. *The Emotions of the Buddha*

It is on rare occasions in the canon that Gautama Buddha showed emotions. But a few cases in the canon suggest that Gautama Buddha felt uneasy and reproached his disciples when they misunderstood and wrongly interpreted his teachings. As the Dharma was his great discovery, his life’s work and his message to the suffering world, he would not tolerate his own monks who misrepresented it through carelessness or ill-will. This was the case particularly when their task was to pass this message down to future generations. Sāti, a fisherman’s son, is a good example. He wrongly understood the master’s teaching that consciousness survived the body and took another form in the new life. Upon hearing this, Gautama cried out: “Foolish man, to whom have you ever known me to teach the Dhamma in that way? Foolish man, in many discourses have I not stated consciousness to be dependently arisen, since without a condition there is no origination of consciousness? But you, foolish man, have misrepresented us by your wrong grasp and injured yourself and stored up much demerit.”<sup>40</sup> Ariṭṭha, a former vulture-trainer, was another monk who was reproached by the Buddha in a similar manner for his misunderstanding of the Dharma. The Buddha blamed him for being a foolish and misguided man.<sup>41</sup> The commentary explains that while reflecting in seclusion, Ariṭṭha came to the conclusion that there would be no harm for bhikṣus to engage in sexual relations with women, and he therefore maintained that this should not be prohibited by the

monastic rules.<sup>42</sup> In both cases the monks were of humble origins and probably did not have any education at all, so they had difficulty in understanding the Buddha's teaching in its philosophical dimensions. But the two topics concerning a fundamental doctrine and a fundamental practice are crucial in the understanding of the Buddha's teachings. It therefore appears that the Buddha reproached them with a personal feeling.

In these two cases, it may perhaps be argued that the Buddha was not angry, but what he said concerning Devadatta suggests that he was angry at least in the literal sense of the word. Devadatta intrigued for the leadership of the Saṃgha and asked the Buddha to hand over it to him. The Buddha said: "Not even to Sāriputta and Moggallāna would I hand over the Order, and would I to thee, vile one, to be vomited like spittle?"<sup>43</sup> In the *Aṅguttaranikāya*, we find the following saying of Gautama Buddha when Ānanda made enquiries on Devadatta: "And so long as, Ānanda, I saw a bright spot in Devadatta, even the prick-end of a horse-hair in size, I declared not: 'Devadatta is wayward gone, hell-bound for a *kalpa*, unpardonable' – but it was when I saw none, that I declared thus..."<sup>44</sup> The same comment is also found in the Chinese counterpart, the *\*Ekottarāgama*.<sup>45</sup> This statement is not unlike a curse, and arguably motivated by anger. The Devadatta incident was a bitter experience in the life of Gautama Buddha because as a monk and disciple in his own community, Devadatta had tried with a certain success to split the Order he had established with much effort. Therefore, whenever Devadatta was mentioned, Gautama Buddha would speak of him as a bad person of evil intention.

The Saṃgha was the disseminator of the Buddha's message to the world. Gautama was very concerned about the split of the Saṃgha for he had seen what had happened to Jaina monks in the last few years of his life.<sup>46</sup> The *\*Mahāvibhāṣāśāstra*, with reference to Devadatta, mentions that the bad *karma* entailed by the destruction of the Saṃgha is graver or heavier than that of shedding the blood of the Buddha. The split of the Saṃgha was explained as the destruction of the *dharmakāya* while

shedding the blood of the Buddha harms the *rūpakāya*.<sup>47</sup>

Apart from these, there are at least two cases in the *Mahāparinibbānasutta* that illustrate the Buddha displaying emotions. These consisted in feeling appreciation towards beautiful things. The first incident was when the Licchavis of Vesālī (Skt: Vaiśālī), wearing clothes of different colours and adorned with various kinds of ornaments, approached the Buddha in carriages. Gautama said to his disciples: “O brethren, let those of the brethren who have never seen the Tāvatiṃsa gods, gaze upon this company of the Licchavis, behold this company of the Licchavis, compare this company of the Licchavis, for they are even as a company of Tāvatiṃsa gods.”<sup>48</sup> The second incident occurred after the Buddha and Ānanda had returned from a begging tour in Vesālī. The Buddha addressed Ānanda: “How delightful a spot, Ānanda, is Vesālī, and how charming the Udena Shrine, and the Gotamaka Shrine...”<sup>49</sup> These two incidents are also mentioned in the Chinese translations of the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*.<sup>50</sup> These pieces of literature suggest that the Buddha had emotions which he manifested in different ways. If a sense of appreciation shows the compassion of Gautama Buddha, then anger definitely shows the human side of him because a Buddha, at least by definition, is a person who has eliminated the three evils: greed, hatred and ignorance. These incidents reveal the human aspect of the Buddha.

#### 4. *Slander and Assaults from Enemies*

There are two incidents concerning the Buddha being slandered by his opponents in early Buddhist literature and they are referred to in the *Pubbakammapiḷoti* of the *Apadāna* as the remaining effects of the bad *karma* done by the Buddha in his previous lives.<sup>51</sup> First, Ciñcāmānavikā, a beautiful female ascetic (*parivrājaka*) from another Order, was persuaded by her fellow ascetics to discredit the Buddha because they found that their gains had diminished due to the popularity of the Buddha. She pretended to have become pregnant by the Buddha by tying a wooden disc around her body and came to where the latter was addressing a large congregation. Her

accusation was soon found out to be false and she was chased out by the audience.<sup>52</sup> The second story is recorded in the *Udāna* about Sundarī, also a female ascetic from another Order, who was persuaded by her fellow ascetics to insult the Buddha and his disciples. She visited Jetavana where the Buddha was residing and pretended to have stayed in the evenings and left in the mornings. After some days, the heretic ascetics hired some villains to kill Sundarī and hide her body under a heap of rubbish near Jetavana. When this was reported to the king, a search was carried out and her body was found. Her fellow ascetics then went about the streets of the city crying: “Behold the deeds of the Śākya monks.”<sup>53</sup>

This analysis of the Buddha’s physical illness, troubles in life, emotions and assaults from enemies suggests that he was a human teacher and guide who had suffered all the possible difficulties of a great man within his own community, as well as from his opponents. It is from this human aspect of the great teacher as described in early Buddhist literature, that the Sarvāstivāda and other Hīnayāna schools formulated their concept of a human Buddha.

## **2. The Superhuman Buddha**

In the descriptions of the same early Buddhist literature, Gautama Buddha is also associated with various kinds of miracles, either performed by him or which occurred naturally to mark special events in his life. Apart from miracles, his physical body is described as having the thirty-two marks of a great man. This superhuman character plays a special and important role in the life of Gautama Buddha as a religious leader and founder. It is possibly due to the tendency to idealize the Buddha that this phenomenon emerged, probably as early as during the lifetime of Gautama.

### *1. The Physical Marks*

The *Lakkhaṇasutta* of the *Dīghanikāya* and the *Brahmāyusutta* of the *Majjhimanikāya* mention that the Buddha had thirty-two physical marks of a great

man (*mahāpurisa*), and this is also confirmed by the Chinese *Āgamas*.<sup>54</sup> But scholars are of the opinion that the concept of a great man is pre-Buddhistic and the tradition was adapted from Brahmanical tradition and applied to the Buddha when the latter was idealized.<sup>55</sup> There are two reasons for this assertion. Firstly, the Buddhist concept of a great man is in a spiritual rather than physical sense because the Buddha reinterpreted the concept of the *mahāpurisa* and gave it a new meaning as he had done with other concepts such as *karma*. Scholars have collected the passages concerning the term *mahāpurisa* in the Pāli canon and pointed out that it was used in an ethical way for one who possessed an emancipated mind (*vimuttacitta*), and one who had destroyed all defilements.<sup>56</sup> In the *Aṅguttaranikāya*, the definition of a *mahāpurisa* is as follows: one who has concerned oneself with the welfare of the great mass of people, having the mastery of thought, the ability to enter the four ecstasies that are beyond thought yet pertaining to the present life, and one that discarded intoxication arising from lust, as well as becomings from speculation and ignorance.<sup>57</sup> In this sense, an arhat could also be called a *mahāpurisa*.<sup>58</sup> However, the faithful followers seemed to have forgotten or rather ignored this fact, and attributed to the Buddha a list of thirty-two physical marks.<sup>59</sup> Secondly, the *Brahmāyusutta* of the *Majjhimanikāya* mentions that it was the Brahmin Brahmāyu, learned in the three Vedas and versed in the marks of a great man, who sent his pupil Uttara to examine the Buddha about his physical marks.<sup>60</sup> The *Selasutta* of the *Suttanipāta* states that the tradition of the marks of a great man had been handed down in the Brahmin hymns.<sup>61</sup> This is a direct reference to the concept of a great man in the Brahmanical tradition.

In addition to the thirty-two marks, Gautama Buddha is also described as having an attractive and penetrative voice of eight qualities: distinct, intelligible, melodious, audible, ringing, euphonious, deep, and sonorous.<sup>62</sup> It is perhaps on this basis that the Mahāsāṃghikas further interpreted that the Buddha only spoke in one voice but sentient beings understood it according to their inclinations.<sup>63</sup> In the

*Mahāparinibbānasutta*, the hue of the Buddha's skin is described as exceedingly bright the night before he passed away, as even the burnished cloth of gold had lost its splendour when he wore the robe.<sup>64</sup> This has been taken up by the Mahāyānists as an important topic and developed as the physical light of the Buddha.

Although it is stated in the *sūtras* that the Buddha had all these distinguishing bodily features, he was not necessarily recognised by ordinary people when he walked about on the road.<sup>65</sup> The *Dhātuvibhaṅgasutta* of the *Majjhimanikāya* mentions that Pukkusāti renounced the world under the name of the Buddha but he had never seen him before. He could not recognise the Buddha when they met in a potter's hut and apologised for calling him 'āvuso' (Skt: *āvusa*, brother) which is a term used for addressing equals.<sup>66</sup> Walpola Rahula says that in early Buddhism, a disciple addressed his master usually by the term *bhante*, which approximately means 'Sir' or 'Lord'.<sup>67</sup> The *Upakkilesasutta* of the same *Nikāya* mentions another example of the Buddha being indistinguishable from other monks in physical appearance. Gautama Buddha, after having left the Kosambī monks, came to the park where venerable Anuruddha and two other fellow monks were staying. The park keeper did not recognise the Buddha by his physical appearance and asked him not to enter the park because there were three mendicants practising seriously.<sup>68</sup> The same incident is also found in the Chinese *\*Ekottarāgama*.<sup>69</sup> In these two instances, had the Buddha possessed the thirty-two bodily marks of a great man, they would certainly have recognised him at a glance. His long arms that could reach to his knees without bending, for instance, constitute visible signs. This suggests that the faithful followers must have added these physical attributes to the Buddha in the course of time in order to glorify him. But as W. Pachow indicates, these marks do not actually enhance the real importance of the Buddha as an enlightened teacher.<sup>70</sup>

## 2. *Miracles*

The miracles associated with Gautama Buddha are traditionally reckoned as



belonging to the *adbhuta-dharma* of the nine or twelve divisions (*navāṅga* or *dvādaśāṅga*) of the Buddhist scripture.<sup>71</sup> They are found in various occurrences in early scriptures. (1) The *Aṅguttaranikāya* mentions an immense light that manifested on four occasions in the life of the Buddha: at the time of his descent from Tuṣṭita Heaven, his birth, his enlightenment and his first public preaching.<sup>72</sup> (2) The *Accharyābbhūtasutta* of the *Majjhimanikāya* is an account of twenty miracles of the Buddha at his birth as extolled by Ānanda, such as an earthquake; two streams of water, one cool and one warm, pouring down from heaven to bathe him; and infinite light.<sup>73</sup> (3) Both the *Aṅguttaranikāya* and the Chinese *Madhyamāgama* mention an earthquake before the Buddha's passing away which is also mentioned in all the versions of the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*.<sup>74</sup> (4) The *Iddhipāda-Saṃyutta* mentions six modes of supernatural power (*abhijñā*) of the Buddha which he gained through meditation.<sup>75</sup>

The fact that the miracles of the Buddha are reckoned as *adbhuta-dharma* by the early compilers of Buddhist scriptures suggests that from the very beginning these wondrous things were looked upon as special events. These miracles can be divided into two groups: (1) the supernormal events that occurred naturally to mark the special occasions in the life of the Buddha such as his birth, enlightenment and death, and (2) the supernormal acts performed by Gautama Buddha himself.

The first group of supernatural events occurred on many important occasions in the life of Gautama Buddha, namely his birth, his enlightenment, his first sermon and his death. The *Accharyābbhūtasutta* of the *Majjhimanikāya* describes a series of miracles that happened to mark the birth of the Buddha. It is perhaps for the faithful devotees that the birth of the Buddha on earth was the most marvellous event to be remembered. Other supernatural events fall primarily into two categories: those pertaining to light and those pertaining to earthquakes. Gokhale remarks that these events are explained as the result of *dharmatā*, the nature of things, implying that they were not causally connected with the Buddha, but had occurred because of the nature

of things.<sup>76</sup> The special events in the life of Gautama Buddha were certainly extraordinary occasions for his faithful followers or even his immediate disciples, and most likely they were persuaded that these should be marked by extraordinary occurrences in nature. However, these events do not affect the attainments and achievements of the Buddha but only suggest that he was not an ordinary being.

The second kind of miracle is important in our study. It falls within the power of the six modes of higher knowledge (*abhijñā*) that not only the Buddha, but anyone who had attained the higher concentration or the four *dhyānas* could perform them such as an *arhat*.<sup>77</sup> This is described in detail in the *Sāmaññaphalasutta* as the fruit of the *samaṇa*'s life.<sup>78</sup> The six modes of higher knowledge are (1) supernatural power (*iddhi-vidhā*), (2) the divine ear (*dibba-sota*), (3) penetration of the minds of others (*ceto-pariya-ñāṇa*), (4) memory of former existences (*pubbe-nivāsānussati*), (5) the divine eye (*dibba-cakkhu*), and (6) extinction of all cankers (*āsavakkhaya*). According to the *Sāmaññaphalasutta*, these six modes of knowledge are in an ascending order and the knowledge of the extinction of all cankers is the highest which can be attained only by a Buddha, a *pratyekabuddha* and an *arhat*. The first five are mundane and the last is supramundane, thus it is only through acquiring the sixth knowledge that one becomes emancipated.

The Buddha, according to the *Mahāsaccakasutta*, had attained three kinds of knowledge on the night of his enlightenment: he perceived his own past lives, he saw the past lives of other beings, and he knew that his cankers were destroyed.<sup>79</sup> These three knowledges correspond to the fourth, the fifth and the sixth of the six modes of higher knowledge.

Most of the miracles performed by the Buddha as mentioned in the *sūtras* and *vinaya* belong to the first category, that of supernatural power (*ṛddhi*).<sup>80</sup> The *vinaya* describes many miracles performed by the Buddha right after his enlightenment: the miracle of hiding Yaśa so that his father could not see him, and the series of miracles to convert the three Kāśyapa brothers.<sup>81</sup> The *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* mentions three

miracles performed by Gautama Buddha through the use of his supernatural power (*ṛddhi*): the crossing of the Ganges River as fast as a strong man would stretch forth his arm;<sup>82</sup> extending his life-span to a *kalpa* or to the end of the *kalpa* if desired;<sup>83</sup> and making turbid water clear.<sup>84</sup> The *Majjhimanikāya* also mentions three miracles of the Buddha: vanishing without a trace in front of Brahmā,<sup>85</sup> walking at his normal pace while Aṅgulimāla could not catch up even at full speed,<sup>86</sup> and showing his male organ with a supernatural feat.<sup>87</sup> There are more examples in the canon but it is unnecessary to mention them all. According to the *Sampasādanīyasutta* of the *Dīghanikāya*, supernatural power is ignoble if it is used for worldly aims and purposes, but it is noble if it is used for a higher and virtuous aim.<sup>88</sup> These powers had little or nothing to do with the realisation of the highest goal of *nirvāṇa*, and it is for this very reason that Gautama implemented monastic rules to prohibit any display of miracles. He considered such displays to be similar to a respectable woman flaunting her womanly tokens in public.<sup>89</sup> When converting individuals, Gautama Buddha always enjoyed using rational persuasion, which is called *amuśāsani prātihārya*, the miracle of education or instruction. The instance of converting the three Kāśyapa brothers is perhaps the only example recorded in the entire Pāli canon when Gautama used supernatural power. This happened at the very beginning of his public ministry when he had no influence at all in religious circles. Hence, it might have been for pragmatic reasons that Gautama had to resort to the power of *ṛddhi*, if he possessed any, to convert these three renowned hair-matted ascetics.

The genuine belief that Gautama Buddha possessed those six modes of higher knowledge most probably existed during his lifetime, and all his *arhat* disciples were also believed to have such knowledge. Maudgalyāyana, who was renowned for his *ṛddhi* power, is a good example. Gokhale also says: “There is reason to believe that Gotama, in the context of his times, accepted without demur, the validity of knowledge gained by extrasensory perception and the ability of a human being to exercise supernatural and supernormal powers by the strength of his will cultivated to

an extraordinary extent.”<sup>90</sup> Although this may be difficult to accept from a modern academic perspective, it is not simply refutable. More acceptable and relevant is that these six modes of higher knowledge distinguish Gautama Buddha from others. However, he did not claim a monopoly of them, but stated rather that anyone could achieve them by means of earnest practise. This suggests that the superhuman character of the Buddha had existed side by side with his human aspect in early Buddhism.

In addition to the six modes of higher knowledge, both the *Nikāyas* and the *Āgamas* mention that the Buddha had ten powers (*bala*) and four kinds of intrepidity (*vaiśāradya*).<sup>91</sup> The Sarvāstivādins asserted that these are the exclusive qualities of the Buddha not shared with *arhats* although they are all equal in terms of liberation. However, as the term ‘exclusive’ is not mentioned in the relevant *sūtras*, the compiler of the *\*Mahāprajñāpāramitāsāstra* states that these qualities are in fact shared with *arhats*. We will return to this topic in the second chapter. Therefore, in the process of idealisation of the Buddha, these qualities along with great compassion (*mahākaruṇa*) and the three bases of mindfulness were termed ‘the eighteen exclusive qualities’ of the Buddha. The ‘eighteen exclusive qualities’ are likely to have had an apocryphal function to distinguish the Buddha from other liberated individuals although they are found individually in the early scriptures.

It is clear from this analysis that the concept of the Buddha in early Buddhism holds two aspects: the human identity and the superhuman character. It is more than probable that on the basis of the human elements of the Buddha, the Sarvāstivādins formulated their concept of the Buddha as a human being. On the other hand, the Mahāsāṃghikas had conceived their transcendental Buddha on the basis of the superhuman or divine powers, because they were the faithful and accepted whatever was said in the *sūtras* as truth which will be discussed in chapter three. This does not necessarily imply that the Sarvāstivādins did not accept the superhuman aspects of the Buddha, but that they considered it with increased caution. Vasumitra’s treatise

mentions that they did not take every word of the Buddha as the teaching of Dharma.

<sup>1</sup> The term “Early Buddhism” indicates the teachings of the Buddha as revealed in the Pāli *Nikāyas* and the Chinese *Āgamas* which are considered by scholars as the earliest form of Buddhist literature.

<sup>2</sup> The *Acchariyābbhūtasutta* of the *Majjhimanikāya* mentions that soon after the Buddha was born he said: “I am the highest in the world; I am the best in the world; I am the foremost in the world. This is my last birth; now there is no renewal of being for me.” (M. iii, 123) This clearly shows the superhuman aspect of the Buddha.

<sup>3</sup> These scholars include M. Senart, *Essai sur la légende du Buddha*, Paris, 1875, and also Hendrich Kern, A. Barth, R. Otto and Ananda Coomaraswamy.

<sup>4</sup> B. G. Gokhale (1994), 107-108.

<sup>5</sup> The *Sekhasutta* of the *Majjhimanikāya* (M i, 354.) records that the Buddha suffered from back pain and asked Ānanda to speak on higher training. Similarly, Moggallāna (S iv, 183-4. T2, 316b), Sāriputta (D iii, 200; T1, 49c; A v, 122; 125), and Anuruddha (T1, 551c-552b) were asked to preach on his behalf under similar circumstances. Stomach troubles of the Buddha are mentioned in many places in the canon such as *Vinaya*, ii, 210; *Theragāthā*, 185; S i, 174-5. It is also found in the *Dhammapada* commentary, iv, 232 and the *Theragāthā* commentary, I, 311.

<sup>6</sup> The Pāli version, D ii, 127-8, the four Chinese translations: T1, 18b, 164c, 180a, 197b.

<sup>7</sup> The *Majjhimanikāya* commentary, i, 465 and the *Dīghanikāya* commentary, iii, 974.

<sup>8</sup> The *Samyuttanikāya* commentary, i, 200.

<sup>9</sup> *Vinaya*, i, 279.

<sup>10</sup> *Miln.* 135.

<sup>11</sup> The *Udāna*, 165-67.

<sup>12</sup> The *Samyuttanikāya* mentions that the Buddha sometimes walked a great part of the night and then washed his feet before going to bed. S i, 106.

<sup>13</sup> S v, 217.

<sup>14</sup> D ii, 100. The English translation is adapted from Rhys Davids’s *The Dialogues of the Buddha*, II, p.107. This is also mentioned in three of the Chinese translations of the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*: T1, 15b, 164c, 180a.

<sup>15</sup> T1, 472a. This *sūtra* must belong to a late date since it contains praises of Ānanda as an attendant of the Buddha for twenty-five years. As an evidence, a similar account of it in the Southern Tradition is found in the commentary on the *Dhammapada*.

<sup>16</sup> The *Dīghanikāya* commentary, ii, 573. For an explanation of the term *gāvuta* see An Yang-Gyu (1998), 257, footnote 2.

<sup>17</sup> *Vinaya*, ii, 257-71. S i, 262.

<sup>18</sup> According to the *Samantapāsādikā* (iii, 613f.), they were all from Sāvatti and were originally acquaintances. Finding a living hard to obtain, they entered the Order under the two chief disciples. They decided among themselves that it was unwise for them all to live in the same place, and they therefore divided themselves into three groups. Each group had five hundred monks attached to it. Of the three groups, the followers of Paṇḍuka and Lohitaka were the most virtuous. Unlike the others, they did not transgress *Vinaya* rules. Cited from DPPN, 926.

<sup>19</sup> The Pāli *Vinaya*, Vol.i, 84f., 104, 106, 111, 113, 114, 138, 160, 170, 185, 189, 192, 194, 203f., 216, 285, 306, 316; Vol. ii, 73, 105ff., 145ff., 213ff., 241, 262, etc. The Chinese *Tripiṭaka*: T1, 191, 217, 360; T3, 149; the *Dhammapada* commentary, iii, 48f., 330, 382. Cited from DPPN, 926.

<sup>20</sup> T2, 279c. Cullavagga. iv, 4. 4-11. The nun Mettiyā was persuaded by a group of monks to accuse Dabba Mallaputta of having an affair with her. After an investigation, it was found to be false.

<sup>21</sup> Vinaya, ii, 262, 266, 269, 271, 276. Cited from DPPN, 926.

<sup>22</sup> M iii, 153.

<sup>23</sup> S ii, 208. T2, 300c-301a.

<sup>24</sup> S ii, 223-4. The translation is adapted from *The Book of Kindred Sayings*, II, 151-2.

<sup>25</sup> Mahāvagga, i, 31.

<sup>26</sup> S ii, 13.

<sup>27</sup> S ii, 50. There is another case of a monk returning to lay life in S iv, 102.

<sup>28</sup> Cullavagga, i, 32-34. The story of Aritṭha is also found in M i, 130.

<sup>29</sup> His defection is given in the *Pāṭikasutta* of the *Dīghanikāya* and his return to lay life is given in the *Mahāsīhanādasutta* of the *Majjhimanikāya*, M i, 68. The *Sunakkhattasutta* (M. No.105) apparently expounded to him by the Buddha before he joined the Order.

<sup>30</sup> M i, 170-171. T1, 777b. During the time of the Buddha, people judged whether a person was or was not an arhat by their serenity of countenance which is an expression of the inner peace. For instance Sāriputta took Assaji as an enlightened person due to his appearance (Vinaya, i, 40).

<sup>31</sup> A ii, 36-37. T2, 28a-b.

<sup>32</sup> A. Naughton (1991), 32.

<sup>33</sup> The discussions held between Gautama Buddha and the wanderer Udāyin are found in the *Mahāsakuludāyisutta* and the *Cūlasakuludāyisutta*, numbers 77 and 79 of the *Majjhimanikāya*. There are several Udāyins mentioned in the *Nikāyas*. According to Mrs Rhys Davids, (*Psalms of Brethren*, PTS, 288, footnote 2) there are three Udāyins who are the disciples of the Buddha: Kāludāyin, Udāyin the great, and a Brahmin Udāyin. The person in our discussion is a wanderer Sakuludāyin.

<sup>34</sup> M i, 108. T1, 603b; T2, 743a.

<sup>35</sup> Cited from *The Middle Length Discourse of the Buddha*, endnote 226.

<sup>36</sup> S i, 112. T2, 772a-b.

<sup>37</sup> The *Dhammapada* commentary, iii, 257.

<sup>38</sup> Vinaya, i, 39-44.

<sup>39</sup> M i, 6.

<sup>40</sup> M i, 258.

<sup>41</sup> M i, 132.

<sup>42</sup> This is referred to in *The Middle Length Discourse of the Buddha*, endnote 249.

<sup>43</sup> Vinaya, ii, 188, “Sāriputtamoggallānānam pi kho ahaṃ Devadatta bhikkhusaṅghaṃ na nissajjeyyaṃ, kim pana tuyhaṃ chavassakhelāpakassā’ti”. It is also mentioned in the \**Dharmaguptakavinaya* (T22, 592b, 我尚不以僧付舍利弗目連，況汝癡人涕唾之身豈可付囑), the \**Daśabhānavārinaya*, (T23, 258b, 舍利弗目連有大智慧神通，佛尚不以眾僧付之，況汝噉唾癡人死人，而當付囑), the \**Mūlasarvāstivādinaya* (T23, 701c, 汝之癡人，如舍利子大目連，我尚不以苾芻僧伽而見付囑，況汝癡人，食人涕唾，而相付囑), the \**Mūlasarvāstivādinaya Saṅghabhedavastu* (T24, 169b, 如我舍利弗大目連，弟子中聰明智慧，梵行神通證羅漢果，我今尚自不以苾芻僧伽而見付囑，豈可況汝無智癡人食唾者乎). This incident is also referred to in the *Abhayarājakumārasutta* (M i, 393). The sense and meaning of the quotation are basically the same in the Vinaya of all these schools and traditions although the wording and expression are slightly different. This

suggests that it is probably historical in nature.

<sup>44</sup> A iii, 401. The translation is adapted from *The Book of the Gradual Sayings*, III, 287.

<sup>45</sup> T2, 567a-c.

<sup>46</sup> According to the *Sāmagāmasutta* (M ii, 243-244), in his last few years, the Buddha observed that Jain monks split after the death of their Master because of different views and understandings on the teachings of their Master.

<sup>47</sup> T27, 601c-602a.

<sup>48</sup> D ii, 96. The translation is adapted from *The Dialogues of the Buddha*, II, 103.

<sup>49</sup> D ii, 102. The translation is adapted from *The Dialogues of the Buddha*, II, 110. It is also mentioned in the *Samyuttanikāya*, v, 258.

<sup>50</sup> The praise of the Licchavis is mentioned in all the four Chinese versions: T1, 13c, 164a, 179b, 194b, but the praise of the city of Vesālī is only found in two: T1, 165a, 180b.

<sup>51</sup> *Apadāna*, i, 299-301.

<sup>52</sup> *Apadāna*, 299-301, verse: 7-9; *Jātaka*, iv, 187f.; *Dhammapada* commentary, iii, 178f.; *Itivuttaka* commentary, 69.

<sup>53</sup> The *Udāna*, iv, 8; the *Udāna* commentary, 256ff.; the *Dhammapada* commentary, iii, 474f.; the *Samyutta* commentary, ii, 528f.; the *Jātaka*, ii, 415f.; and the *Apadāna*, 299-301, verse: 4-6. According to the commentary of the *Majjhimanikāya*, this is also referred to in the *Bāhitikasutta* of the *Majjhimanikāya* that King Pasenadi inquired Ānanda about it.

<sup>54</sup> The thirty-two marks of a great man are mentioned in many early *sūtras*: the Pāli suttas such as the *Mahāpadānasutta*, D ii, 17-19; the *Lakkhaṇasutta*, D iii, 143-144; the *Brahmāyusutta*, M ii, 136-137; the Chinese translations such as the \**Dīrghāgama*, T1, 5a-b; the \**Madhyamāgama*, T1, 686; 883c-884a; the \**Samghabhedavastu* of the \**Mūlasarvāstivādinaya*, T24, 108c-109a and the *Mahāvastu*, i, 226; ii, 29.

They are also found in many biographies of the Buddha in Chinese translations: the \**Lalitavistara* (《普曜經》), T3, 496a-b; the *Fangguangdazhuangyejing* (《方廣大莊嚴經》), T3, 557a; the \**Kumārakuśalaphalanidānasūtra* (《太子瑞應本起經》), T3, 474a; the \**Ātītapratyutpannahetuphalasūtra* (《過去現在因果經》), T3, 627a-b; the \**Abhiñiṣkramanasūtra* (《佛本行集經》), T3, 692c-693a (S. Beal's English translation, *The Romantic Legend of Śākya Buddha*, 55); the \**Samadattamahārājasūtra* (《眾許摩訶帝經》), T3, 940b-c.

They are found in many Mahāyāna *sūtras* such as: the \**Pañcaviṃśatiprajñāpāramitāsūtra* (《大般若般羅蜜經》), T6, 967b-968a; the \**Mahāprajñāpāramitāsūtra* (《摩訶般若般羅蜜經》), T8, 395b; the *Abhisamayālaṅkāra*, viii, st.13-20; the *Mahāvvyūtpatti*, no.236-267; the *Dharmasaṃgraha*, ed. Muller, ch.83, 18-19; the \**Dharmasaṃgrahanāmasaṅkhyasūtra* (《法集名數經》), T17, 661b.

In the commentaries, they are found in the MPPŚ (《大智度論》), T25, 90a-91a; the \**Yogācārabhūmi* (《瑜伽師地論》), the *Bodhisattvabhūmi*, ed. Wogihara, 375-376; the *Uttaratantra*, tr. Obermiller, 263-264; and the *Abhisamayālaṅkāraloka*, ed. Wogihara, 918-919.

<sup>55</sup> Hajime Nakamura, for instance, *Gotama Buddha – Shakuson no Shōgai* (*Gotama Buddha – The Life of Śākyamuni*), 513.

<sup>56</sup> T. W. Rhys Davids, *The Dialogues of the Buddha*, iii, 134-135. T. Endo (1997),

139-140. The passages concerning the *mahāpurisa* are found in the *Samyuttanikāya*, v, 158, the *Suttanipāta*, verse No. 1040-1042, and the *Dhammapada*, verse No. 352.

<sup>57</sup> A ii, 35.

<sup>58</sup> *Dhammapada*, verse 352.

<sup>59</sup> H. Nakamura is of the opinion that it is the Buddhists who first formulated the list of the thirty-two marks. Cited from T. Endo (1997), 139.

<sup>60</sup> M ii, 133-134.

<sup>61</sup> The *Suttanipāta*, 106.

<sup>62</sup> D ii, 211, M ii, 140. This is also referred to at M ii, 166f.

<sup>63</sup> T49, 15b.

<sup>64</sup> D ii, 133-134. This is also mentioned in all the four Chinese translations: T1, 19c, 168b-c, 184a, and 198b-c.

<sup>65</sup> Some prominent features in the thirty-two marks of the Buddha stipulate that one can immediately recognize him when one meets him. The Buddha, for instance, had long arms so that his palms of both hands could touch and rub against his knees without stooping. He had wheels with a thousand spokes and ribs and complete hubs on the soles of his feet. See the *Lakkhaṇasutta* of the *Dīghanikāya*, iii, 142-144.

<sup>66</sup> M iii, 238-247. Sutta No. 140.

<sup>67</sup> W. Rahula (1985), 7, footnote 2.

<sup>68</sup> M iii, 155.

<sup>69</sup> T2, 629b.

<sup>70</sup> W. Pachow (1986), 31.

<sup>71</sup> The *adbhuta-dharma* includes three kinds of miracles or wonderful things: the miracles associated with the Buddha, the miracles of the Dharma and the miracles of the *ārya* Saṃgha. But, according to the *Vibhāṣā* (T27, 660b), the term *adbhuta-dharma* originally meant the miracles of the Buddha. "What is *adbhuta-dharma*? It is the accounts in the scriptures of the miracles associated with the Triple Gem (*triratna*). But other teachers say that it is the accounts of disciples in praise of the Buddha's marvellous deeds or miracles such as Śāriputra who praises the Buddha for his great merit and Ānanda who praises the wonderful things about the Buddha." Here what 'the other teachers say' solely concerns the miracles of the Buddha. It is also said in the Chinese translation of the *Lalitavistara*: "The *adbhuta-dharma* is such as Ānanda who praises the Buddha for his wonderful things." (T4, 643c) But, according to the MPPŚ, "The Buddha manifested various kinds of wonderful things and sentient beings were amazed and thought it was marvellous (*adbhuta*). This is *adbhuta-dharma*." (T25, 308a) So *adbhuta-dharma* originally only included the miracles of the Buddha.

<sup>72</sup> A ii, 130-135.

<sup>73</sup> M iii, 118-124. The Sanskrit counterpart of this *sutta* is found in the Chinese \**Madhyamāgama* (T1, 469c-471c), but it is slightly longer than the Pāli one which narrates the miracles from the appearance of the Bodhisattva in the Tuṣita Heaven to his birth on earth. The Chinese version includes another ten miracles different from the ones mentioned in the Pāli version.

<sup>74</sup> The *Bhūmicālasutta* of the *Aṅguttaranikāya* iv. 307. The same *sūtra* is also found in T1, 477b—478b. An earthquake is also mentioned in the Chinese \**Ekottarāgama*, T2, 753c-754a.

<sup>75</sup> S v, 288-290.

<sup>76</sup> B. G. Gokhale (1994), 98.



<sup>77</sup> The *Iddhipāda-Saṃyutta* mentions that both samaṇas and Brahmins could gain the first five modes of higher knowledge. (S v, 275ff) It is only the Buddhist recluses who could achieve the sixth, the knowledge of *āsravas* being destroyed.

<sup>78</sup> The *Dīghanikāya*, sutta No. 2, the \**Dīrghāgama*, sūtra No. 27.

<sup>79</sup> M i, 247-249.

<sup>80</sup> The stereotype text of *iddhi* found in all the four Sutta collections (e.g. D i, 78) is as follows: Now, O Bhikkhus, the monk enjoys the various magical powers (*iddhi-vidhā*), such as being one he becomes manifold, and having become manifold he again becomes one. He appears and disappears. Without being obstructed he passes through walls and mountains, just as if through the air. In the earth he dives and rises up again, just as if in the water. He walks on water without sinking, just as if on the earth. Cross-legged he floats through the air, just like a winged bird. With his hand he touches the sun and moon, these so mighty ones, so powerful ones. Even up in the Brahma-world he has mastery over his body.

<sup>81</sup> Vinaya, Mahāvagga, i, 15-34. *The Book of Discipline*, iv, 24-46.

<sup>82</sup> D ii, 89.

<sup>83</sup> D ii, 103.

<sup>84</sup> D ii, 129.

<sup>85</sup> M i, 330

<sup>86</sup> M ii, 99.

<sup>87</sup> M ii, 135.

<sup>88</sup> D iii, 112-113.

<sup>89</sup> The monastic rules concerning the prohibition of performing miracles are found in the *Vinaya*, ii, 112-113. See also the *Cullavagga*, v, 8; *The Book of Discipline*, v, 151.

<sup>90</sup> B. G. Gokhale (1994), 107.

<sup>91</sup> The list of the ten powers are found in M i, 69-72; A. v, 33-36; the \**Dīrghāgama*, T2, 41b-c; the \**Saṃyuktāgama*, T2, 186c-187a; the \**Ekottarāgama*, T2, 776b-c; 859a. The list of the four kinds of intrepidity is found in M i, 71-72. But both the powers and the four kinds of intrepidity are mentioned in numerous places in the *Nikāyas* and the *Āgamas*.

## Chapter Two

### The Concept of the Buddha in the Early Indian Buddhist Schools (I)

#### -- the Sarvāstivāda

The concept of the Buddha was significantly advanced at the time of the early Indian Buddhist schools, especially the Sarvāstivāda and the Mahāsāṃghika.<sup>1</sup> The Sarvāstivādins were more empirical in their approach. They summarized and synthesized the attributes and qualities of the Buddha as described in the early *sūtras* before formulating for the first time the two-body theory: that of the *rūpakāya* and the *dharmakāya*.<sup>2</sup> The *rūpakāya*, according to the Sarvāstivādins, although impure, is endowed with thirty-two major and eighty minor marks as well as a one-fathom halo. The *dharmakāya* is endowed with the eighteen exclusive attributes: the ten powers, the four kinds of intrepidity, the three foundations of mindfulness and great compassion. None of the constituents of both the *rūpakāya* and the *dharmakāya* are innovative, rather they consist of the qualities of the Buddha which were already present in early Buddhism. Some of them were simply adopted from the *Nikāyas* and the *Āgamas* with further explanations, such as the ten powers and the thirty-two major marks. Other qualities were adopted after careful synthesis. For instance, the eighty minor marks and the one-fathom halo. This will become clear as we proceed to analyse the Sarvāstivāda concept of the Buddha step by step.

#### 1. The Two-Body Theory

Scholars such as Yinshun postulate that the two-body theory, the *rūpakāya* and the *dharmakāya* of the Buddha, was formulated for the first time by Nāgārjuna in his \**Mahāprajñāpāramitāsāstra* (MPPŚ) in order to solve the complex problem concerning the *rūpakāya* of the Buddha, which was the issue of his superhuman attributes, a subject of debate between the Sarvāstivādins and the Mahāsāṃghikas for several centuries.<sup>3</sup> However, early Buddhist schools such as the Sarvāstivāda had

already formulated this theory to explain their concept of the Buddha in the *Vibhāṣā*. The latter predates the composition of the MPPŚ.<sup>4</sup> There are three Chinese translations of the *Vibhāṣā*, and the two-body theory is found in all of them.

In order to have a clear understanding of this two-body theory, let us first examine the three different Chinese translations of the *Vibhāṣā*. The earliest translation by Saṅghabhūti in 383 CE is entitled the \**Vibhāṣāśāstra* and is comprised of fourteen fascicules. According to the preface written by Daoan (道安 312-385 CE), a contemporary of Saṅghabhūti, the treatise was originally much larger, but the oral transmitter of the text forgot parts of it so that only forty discussions had been translated.<sup>5</sup> The second translation by Buddhavarma in 437-439 CE is entitled \**Abhidharmavibhāṣāśāstra*. It was originally in one hundred fascicules, but due to unrest in the area where the translation was being conducted, forty fascicules were lost and only sixty are extant. The longest and latest recension is the \**Mahāvibhāṣāśāstra (Vibhāṣā)* in two hundred fascicules, translated by Xuanzang in 656-659 CE. According to Yinshun's study on the Sarvāstivāda teachers and treatises, the *Vibhāṣā* has been rearranged, revised and enlarged over the course of time ever since its first compilation. Even the earliest Chinese translation of Saṅghabhūti was not rendered from the first original version, but from the medium length and revised version. Buddhavarma's is a revised and also enlarged version while Xuanzang's is the longest and latest.<sup>6</sup>

Let us now return to the discussion of the two-body theory in the three versions. The *Vibhāṣā* mentions the two-body theory when it discusses the purity of the Buddha's *rūpakāya*. The Mahāsāṃghikas asserted that the *rūpakāya* is pure due to the following statement found in the *sūtras*: "The Tathāgata was born in the world, abided in the world, and yet was not defiled by the worldly *dharmas*."<sup>7</sup> But the Sarvāstivādins differed with the Mahāsāṃghikas by using the two-body theory to reinterpret the same quotation.

According to the earliest translation of the *Vibhāṣā*, the Sarvāstivādins stated: "It

is on account of the *dharmakāya* that the *sūtra* states thus. However, it also refers to the *rūpakāya* when it says: ‘the Tathāgata was born in the world and abided in the world.’ While the *sūtra* refers to the *dharmakāya* when it says: ‘yet he was not defiled by (lit. attached to) the worldly *dharmas* and attached to nothing (because he) attained *sambodhi* so he transcended the world’.”<sup>8</sup>

The second translation contains a similar statement. “The *sūtra* refers to the *rūpakāya* when it says: ‘the Tathāgata was born in the world and abided in the world’, but it refers to the *dharmakāya* when it says: ‘appearing in the world but was not defiled by the worldly *dharmas*’.”<sup>9</sup>

The third translation of the *Vibhāṣā* concurs thus by stating: “The *sūtra* speaks secretly concerning the *dharmakāya*. It refers to the Buddha’s *rūpakāya* appearing in the world when it says: ‘the Tathāgata was born in the world and abided in the world’, but it refers to the *dharmakāya* when it says: ‘yet it was not defiled by the worldly *dharmas*’.”<sup>10</sup>

It is evident here that the concept of the Buddha of the Sarvāstivāda School includes two bodies: the physical body and the spiritual body. There exists evidence that strongly supports the assertion that the two-body theory was formulated earlier than the MPPŚ. Firstly, the original version of the *Vibhāṣā*, according to Yinshun, may have been composed in the second century CE after King Kaniṣka’s rule and before the composition of the MPPŚ.<sup>11</sup> This follows that the MPPŚ mentions the title of the *Vibhāṣā* ten times: five times as *Apītanpiposa* (*Abhidharmavibhāṣā*), and five times just as *piposa* (*Vibhāṣā*) or *piposalun* (*Vibhāṣāśāstra*).<sup>12</sup> Apart from this, it also mentions ‘the disciples of Kātyāyanīputra’ or simply ‘Kātyāyanīputra’ seven times, twice in association with the *Abhidharmavibhāṣā* and three times in association with the *Abhidharma*.<sup>13</sup> The author even quoted the *Vibhāṣā* many times, mostly in the context of criticism. The following are three places in which the title of the *Vibhāṣā* is mentioned in the MPPŚ, two times in association with Kātyāyanīputra:<sup>14</sup>

“The disciples of Kātyāyanīputra said: ‘although in the *Tripīṭaka* the Buddha did

not say it, logically, it should be so. It is said so in the chapter on the bodhisattva in the *Abhidharmavibhāṣā*’.”<sup>15</sup>

“It is stated in the *Abhidharmavibhāṣā* of Kātyāyanīputra thus: ‘it is not mentioned in the *Tripīṭaka*’.”<sup>16</sup>

When discussing the bad *karma* of the Buddha, it is stated in the MPPŚ: “The Buddha did not say so, it is said by the *Abhidharmavibhāṣāśāstra* teachers. Answer: the *Abhidharma* was preached by the Buddha, and you, *śrāvakas*, composed the *Vibhāṣā* on the basis of the *Abhidharma*, and thus this should not be wrong. Again, Vakula did not fall into the evil realms for ninety-one *kalpas* as a result of offering to the Saṅgha a *haritakī* (Pāli: *harītaka*) fruit. How could the Bodhisattva fall into hell on account of some insignificant *karma* since he had obtained much merit by making offerings with his own body in numerous lives? Thus the *Vibhāṣā* could not be wrong. The Hīnayānists, therefore, do not understand the *upāyakaūśalya* of the Bodhisattva.”<sup>17</sup>

These quotations show that the author of the MPPŚ not only knew the *Vibhāṣā* itself, but was also well acquainted with the background of its composition. He knew that the great Sarvāstivāda teacher Kātyāyanīputra and his disciples were closely related to the *Vibhāṣā*. Lamotte is of the opinion that the author of the MPPŚ was an expert on the *Abhidharma* of the Sarvāstivāda and might even have taught the six *Abhidharmas* and the *Vibhāṣā* in either Kashmir or Gandhāra before he was converted to the Mahāyāna.<sup>18</sup> The author frequently quotes from the *Abhidharma* works of the Sarvāstivāda School both to support his opinion and to provide critical remarks. Lamotte suggests that the author may even have had a copy of the *Vibhāṣā* at hand when he composed the MPPŚ. It is fairly certain that the two-body theory had already been formulated and used by different schools, in particular the Sarvāstivāda, prior to the composition of the MPPŚ. The author of the MPPŚ simply adopted the two-body theory from the *Vibhāṣā* to explain the complex problem concerning the *rūpakāya* of the Buddha since it was the most sophisticated theory concerning the concept of the

Buddha at the time.

One may suspect that although the date of composition of the earliest version of the *Vibhāṣā* is attributed to a time earlier than that of the MPPŚ, the former text may still have been influenced by or have actually adopted the two-body theory from the latter. The *Vibhāṣā* had been revised and enlarged time and again in the course of transmission before it was translated. However, this argument does not stand since the two-body theory is found in all three Chinese translations as discussed above. Moreover, the date of the earliest translation of the *Vibhāṣā* is certainly earlier than the translation of the MPPŚ by Kumārajīva in 402-406 CE. This does not however absolutely guarantee that the MPPŚ was drafted later.

Thus we can see that the *rūpakāya* and the *dharmakāya* were already formulated as a theory by the Sarvāstivādins prior to the composition or translation of the MPPŚ. The date of its first appearance can be assigned at the latest to the second century when the *Vibhāṣā* was composed.

Reynolds has shown that there are descriptions of several bodies of the Buddha found in early Buddhism, namely the *dhammakāya*, the *rūpakāya*, and the *manomayakāya*.<sup>19</sup> It seems however that these terms encapsulate only simplistic ideas and concepts which cannot be considered as a theory when compared to the *Abhidharma* works of the Sarvāstivāda School. There are four passages in the Pāli *Nikāyas* that refer directly to the term *dhammakāya*, and have been collected and analysed by N. Dutt.<sup>20</sup> In these passages, the term *dhammakāya* simply denotes the teaching of the Buddha and has no philosophical contents whatsoever. We will return to this topic in the fourth chapter. The only instance where both the physical body (*pūṭikāya*) and the *dhammakāya* are mentioned is in the *Samyuttanikāya* where Vakkali wished to see the Buddha in person. The explicit emphasis of the *sūtra* is that the Buddha advised Vakkali to learn and practise the Dharma rather than to see his physical body. It was the Sarvāstivādins who first formulated the two-body theory to explain the concept of the Buddha.

## 2. The Rūpakāya

The concept of the *rūpakāya* of the Sarvāstivāda school can be divided into two aspects: its nature and its physical attributes. According to the Sarvāstivādins, the nature of the *rūpakāya* is impure (*āśrava*) while the physical attributes are best described in a stock passage which frequently appears in the *Vibhāṣā*: “The Buddha has thirty-two major marks as physical adornment and eighty minor marks as ornaments, his body is golden in colour with a one-fathom halo radiating from it.”<sup>21</sup> Thus, apart from the thirty-two major marks and the golden complexion found in early Buddhist *sūtras*, the Sarvāstivādins formulated another two sets of qualities and added them to the *rūpakāya* of the Buddha: the eighty minor marks and one-fathom long rays.

### 1. On the Nature of the Rūpakāya

The Sarvāstivādins asserted the impurity of the Buddha’s *rūpakāya* although they attributed him a lot of physical qualities. According to the *Vibhāṣā*, they affirmed it for two reasons. “The *rūpakāya* of the Buddha was born from *āśrava*, it is therefore said to be impure, and as it can also cause *āśrava* to rise in others, it is not pure.”<sup>22</sup> In order to support their assertion, the Sarvāstivādins argued: “It is against the *sūtras* that the *rūpakāya* is considered to be pure (*anāśrava*). It is stated in the *sūtras* that ‘the fool as well as the wise one obtains the physical body with consciousness due to ignorance and attachment’.<sup>23</sup> The Buddha was considered as one of the wise so his body was a result of ignorance and attachment. Consequently his body was not pure. If the physical body of the Buddha was pure without defilement, then women would not love, Aṅgulimālya would not hate, the Uruvilva Kāśyapa brothers would not be ignorant of, and the proud Brahman would not look down upon the Buddha. The *rūpakāya* must be impure since it causes greed, hatred, illusion and pride.”<sup>24</sup>

It is clear from this argument that the two reasons given by the Sarvāstivādins in

support of their concept of the impure *rūpakāya* are: (1) it is born of *āśrava*, the result of ignorance and attachment, and (2) it causes *āśrava* to rise in others. In the context of the first reason, the following problem arises. If the *rūpakāya* of the Buddha was not pure and was the result of ignorance and attachment, then was the consciousness of the Bodhisattva not pure when he descended from the Tuṣita heaven and entered the womb of his mother? In the same *Vibhāṣā*, however, it is said that the Bodhisattva entered his mother's womb during his last birth with correct thought, without inverting thought and he likewise abided in the womb and was born.<sup>25</sup> The Sarvāstivādins put forward the following explanation to reconcile this contradiction. They stated, "Right thought only means without inverted (*viparīta*) thought and without inverted recognition (*adhimokṣa*), not the absence of ignorance. The Bodhisattva also had love towards both his body and his parents when he took birth. Question: if so, what is the difference between a Buddha and a sentient being? Answer: an ordinary sentient being, when he obtains birth, does not think of father as father and mother as mother. Therefore, the male hates his father while he breeds love towards his mother. In other words, there arises inverted thought in the male to meet the mother and in the female to meet the father. The Bodhisattva was different in that he thought of father as father and mother as mother. (The Bodhisattva thought thus:) 'depending on them I will get a body, will obtain the superior reward in Jambudvīpa and then attain *anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi* by which I will benefit sentient beings.' When this thought arose, he bred love towards his parents and thus was born. Therefore, right thought means without inverted thought, not the absence of *kleśa*."<sup>26</sup> Thus the Sarvāstivādins solved the problem in a logical manner.

With regard to the second reasoning that the *rūpakāya* of the Buddha could cause *āśrava* in others to arise since it was not pure, the other schools inquired just how the Tathāgata had eliminated all the *kleśas* and habitual forces (*vāsanā*) whilst still impure.<sup>27</sup> The Sarvāstivādins explained that though the Buddha had eliminated all *āśravas* in himself, he could still cause *āśravas* in others.<sup>28</sup> Although the Buddha



could abide in non-quarrelling (*araṇā*), for the sake of sentient beings he did not perpetually abide in it. He either consoled or praised or even scolded his disciples according to their temperaments in order to guide them in the Dharma. They might breed hatred, pride or greed as a result of the rebuke or praise, but they would have planted the good seed within.<sup>29</sup> The argument put forward by the Sarvāstivādins is that out of compassion the Buddha “quarrelled” with others in order to save them. As discussed in the first chapter, the Buddha probably had shown some kind of indignation and appreciation during his lifetime. If this were to be the case, the Sarvāstivāda argument would indeed be forceful.

## 2. *Physical Attributes of the Rūpakāya*

The physical attributes of the Buddha, as mentioned above, consist of four categories: (1) the thirty-two major marks, (2) the eighty minor marks, (3) a golden complexion and (4) a one-fathom halo. These four categories are also mentioned with some variation in both the *Milindapañha* and its counterpart, the Chinese translation of the *\*Nāgasena Bhikṣu Sūtra*.<sup>30</sup> The latter is very short when compared to the former and corresponds only to the first part of the *Milindapañha* from pp. 1 -- 89.<sup>31</sup> Scholars are of the opinion that the original First Part was first compiled in the first century CE.<sup>32</sup> This would indicate that these physical attributes of the Buddha were already formulated by the first century CE.

In order to trace the development of these four categories of physical attributes of the Buddha, we must analyse the *avadāna* literature which forms a special group of texts narrating the past lives of the Buddha and his disciples. The Chinese translation of the *avadāna* texts can be divided into the following three groups according to the categories of the Buddha attributes mentioned above. The first group includes the *sūtras* that mention only the first two categories, namely the thirty-two major and eighty minor marks. They are the *\*Madhyametyuktasūtra*, the *Dafangbianfobaoenjing*, the *\*Atītapratyutpannahetuphalasūtra*, the *\*Mahālaṅkārasūtraśāstra* attributed to

Aśvaghōṣa, and the \**Abhiṅṣkramaṇasūtra*.<sup>33</sup> Amongst these five texts, the first two were translated between the end of the second and the beginning of the third century CE.<sup>34</sup> The second group includes *sūtras* that mention three categories of the Buddha attributes: the first two plus the fourth, that of the light. They are the \**Caryānidānasūtra*, the \**Pūrṇamukhāvadānaśataka*, the \**Dharmapadāvadānasūtra*, the \**Karuṇāpūṇḍarīkasūtra*, the \**Mūlajātaḥṛdayabhūmidhyānasūtra*, and the \**Samadattamahārājasūtra*.<sup>35</sup> The first two were translated between the end of the second and the end of the third century CE. The only *sūtra* that mentions the first two and the golden complexion is the \**Samantaprabhāsasūtra*, a version of the *Lalitavistara*, which was translated by Dharmarakṣa in 308.<sup>36</sup> The third group includes *sūtras* that mention all four categories of the Buddha attributes. There are ten such texts in all. The \**Nidānacaryāsūtra* was the first to be translated at the end of the second century CE. The majority of the pertinent texts were translated between the third and the fourth century.<sup>37</sup>

This brief survey suggests that the development of these four categories of the physical attributes of the Buddha can be divided into at least three stages. The first stage is the appearance of the thirty-two marks in the late strata of the *Nikāyas* and the *Āgamas*. The second stage is the addition of the eighty minor marks to the list of the Buddha's physical attributes when the *avadāna* literature began to develop. The Pāli *Apadāna*, which belongs to the *Khuddakanikāya*, the latest in its formation amongst the five *Nikāyas*, already mentions the term 'eighty minor marks'.<sup>38</sup> It is during the third and last stage that the golden complexion and one-fathom halo were added to the list, by the first century CE at the latest. The appearance of the *Milindapañha* marks the completion of the formulation of the four categories of the physical attributes of the Buddha.

The four categories of the physical attributes of the Buddha were likely to have originated in or at least have been closely associated with the Sarvāstivāda school. After all the \**Nāgasena Bhikṣu Sūtra* is closely related to, if not directly belonging to

this school. There are several points in support of this assertion. First, the birthplace of Nāgasena was Kashmir, where the chief centre of the Sarvāstivāda was located according to the Chinese translation mentioned above.<sup>39</sup> Second, according to N. Dutt, Nāgasena is referred to in the \**Abhidharmakośavyākhyā* as *pūrvaka sthavira*, a teacher of the Sarvāstivāda school.<sup>40</sup> Third, Dutt thinks that the original text was most probably in Sanskrit. Other scholars such as Rhys Davids are also of a similar opinion that the *Milindapañha* was a translation either from Sanskrit or some North Indian *Prakrit*.<sup>41</sup> The Sarvāstivādins were known to have used Sanskrit as their literary language. Fourth, the names of places mentioned in the \**Nāgasena Bhikṣu Sūtra* suggest that the original text was probably compiled in Northwest India, the stronghold of the Sarvāstivāda school. For instance, *Sāgala*, or *Se-jian* in Chinese, is identified as Sialkot in West India.<sup>42</sup> Fifth, King Milinda/Menander, the main interlocutor of the dialogues, flourished in Northwest India. One may thus conclude that it was the Sarvāstivādins who first formulated these four categories of attributes as the physical marks of the Buddha. These four categories have become a codified list, formulated in stock phrases to describe the physical qualities of the Buddha in many later works such as the *Vibhāṣā*. Even the Mahāyānists adopted them in their literature. The following is an analysis of these physical attributes of the Buddha.

#### (1) The Thirty-two Major Marks

On the basis of the thirty-two marks in early Buddhism, the Sarvāstivādins developed the idea further, making the *rūpakāya* physically perfect in every aspect. For instance, the complexion of the Buddha's body, which is explained as having the colour of gold in the *Dīghanikāya*, is not in itself novel. But the Sarvāstivādins interpreted it as a superhuman quality. For them the glory of the Buddha's bodily golden rays exceeded all worldly golden light and surpassed even the light of the Paranirmitavaśavartin, the highest heaven in the world of desire. The skin of the Buddha is said to be so delicately smooth that no dust cleaves to his body. This is

further interpreted to imply that even if the Buddha walks on a dust mountain with a strong wind blowing, no dust would cleave to his body or feet. The Sarvāstivādins explained that the Buddha's superior and supremely keen taste was a result of the purity of his tongue so that all kinds of food became delicious when they came into contact with it. The mark of Brahmā's voice, which is described in the *sūtras* as corresponding to the voice of the karaviṅka bird, is explained as the result of a wonderful element in the throat of the Buddha that makes him speak with a pleasant, elegant and harmonious voice.<sup>43</sup> These examples show that the Sarvāstivādins developed the thirty-two major marks and attributed superhuman qualities to the Buddha that are not found in early Buddhist literature although they insisted on the impurity of the *rūpakāya*.

The Sarvāstivādins, according to the *Vibhāṣā*, even attempted to explain the merits required for the achievement of the thirty-two major marks, but they had different opinions among themselves.<sup>44</sup> Some said that they are caused by one thought but have to be completed with many thoughts. Others said that they are caused by thirty-two respective thoughts such as one causing flat soles and another providing for the appearance of a protuberance on top of the head. Thus the thirty-two major marks are caused by thirty-two respective thoughts and the completion of each mark requires a substantial accumulation of virtuous *karma*. There are different opinions with regard to which one of the thirty-two major marks was first manifested on Śākyamuni. Some were of the opinion that the mark of the flat soles was caused first in order for other marks to follow. Still others thought that the mark of blue eyes was the first because the Buddha observed the world with such eyes. As we have already noticed the lists of thirty-two marks in most *sūtras* begin with 'the flat soles', and it is only in a few biographical *sūtras* such as the \**Kumārakuśalaphalanidāna-sūtra*, the \**Vaipulyamahāvvyūhasūtra*, and the Chinese translation of the *Lalitavistara* that the list starts with the crown protuberance. The first theory was likely to have been based on the early *sūtras* that usually begin with the mark of the flat soles.

The Sarvāstivādins further explained that each of the thirty-two major marks is the outcome of one hundred merits, which is the same as one hundred thoughts.<sup>45</sup> The Bodhisattva would initially have fifty thoughts to make the physical body pure, providing the conditions for a *mahāpuruṣa* mark to rise. Then he would need one thought to initiate the process and a further fifty thoughts to complete one mark. The same process is repeated for the other thirty-one marks. Thus each of the Buddha's bodily marks was endowed with one hundred merits.

With regard to the fifty thoughts, opinions were divided again amongst the Sarvāstivādins. Some explained that there are five thoughts for each of the ten *kuśalakarmas*: (1) the thought not to kill, (2) the thought of exhortation, (3) the thought of praise, (4) the thought of enjoyment of other people's good deeds and (5) the thought of one's good deeds for *bodhi*. But others interpreted the five thoughts for each of the ten *kuśalakarmas* differently as lower, medium, upper, superior and highest thoughts. Still others interpreted it in the following way: (1) the thought of purity by *prayoga*, (2) the thought of fundamental purity, (3) the thought of purity arising subsequently, (4) the thought not harmed by investigation (*vitarka*) and (5) the thought associated with mindfulness.

With regard to the quantity of one's merit the authors of the *Vibhāṣā*, after a review of various opinions, explain that the merit of the Buddha is immeasurable. This is due to the fact as a bodhisattva he practiced the *pāramitās* for three *asaṃkhyeyakalpas*. It is only Buddhas who acquire such great quantities of merit that comprise the one hundred merits required for gaining one *mahāpuruṣa* mark. Thus each of the thirty-two major marks is endowed with one hundred merits.

It is interesting to note that in their commentaries, the Theravādins maintain that the Buddha's mark of one hundred merits (*satapuññalakkhaṇa*) was a separate issue.<sup>46</sup> It is explained in the commentary to the *Buddhavaṃsa*:

“The mark of a hundred merits means that if all beings in the endless *Cakkavālas* were each to perform one meritorious deed a hundred times, the Bodhisatta was born,

having by himself performed a hundredfold all the deeds done by all these beings. Therefore, he is referred to as having the mark of a hundred merits. But ‘some’ say that each mark is produced for every hundred meritorious deeds. Considering that ‘anyone may become a Buddha’ [this interpretation] is rejected in the commentaries.”<sup>47</sup>

Here, the mark of a hundred merits means countless merits performed by the Buddha in the past as a Bodhisattva. However, the sentence “ ‘some’ say that each mark is produced for every hundred meritorious deeds” coincides with the Sarvāstivāda explanation with which the Theravādins appear to disagree. Comparing the two explanations given by the two schools on the one hundred merits, that of the Theravāda is not clear because it is ambiguous as to whether the mark of a hundred merits refers to all the merits done by the Buddha as a Bodhisattva or only a part of them. The Sarvāstivāda explanation appears more logical and intuitive, since for each mark the Buddha performed one hundred merits. It may be possible that the Theravādins have been heavily influenced by the Sarvāstivāda interpretation.

The merits required for these marks, according to the Sarvāstivāda, are completed in the last hundred *mahākalpas*. It is stated in the *Vibhāṣā*: “How long does it take to complete the maturation of the marks? Answer: it usually takes one hundred *mahākalpas*, but Śākyamuni bodhisattva took only ninety-one due to his industrious work.”<sup>48</sup> These one hundred *mahākalpas* came after the completion of the third *asaṃkhyeyakalpa*, when the bodhisattva was destined to become a Buddha, and during this period of time, the bodhisattva practiced only for the purpose of the completion of the marks.<sup>49</sup>

According to tradition, the cakravartin king also has the thirty-two major marks on his body. Then what is the difference between the Buddha’s marks and those of the cakravartin? The Sarvāstivādins explained that the marks of the Buddha are superior in six ways: (1) magnificent, (2) distinct, (3) complete, (4) in the proper place, (5) in accordance with superior wisdom, (6) in accordance with the destruction of *kleśa*.<sup>50</sup>

## (2) The Eighty Minor Marks

The eighty minor marks (*aṣṭi-anuvyañjanāni*) of the Buddha, which are not found in early Buddhism, are probably another development of the Sarvāstivādins. A careful analysis of the eighty items shows that they are not new creations, but a much more detailed physical description of the Buddha on the basis of the thirty-two major marks. The following table is a comparison of the similarities between the *Mahāpuruṣalakṣaṇa* and the *aṣṭi-anuvyañjanāni*.

Table I, Comparison of the *Mahāpuruṣalakṣaṇa* and the *aṣṭi-anuvyañjanāni* <sup>51</sup>

Mahāpurisalakkhaṇa	<i>aṣṭi-anuvyañjanāni</i>
1. he has well-planted feet (suppatitthipāda),	10. even feet,
2. his palms and soles are marked with wheels (hetthāpadatalesu cakkāni jātāni),	43. fine hand lines, 44. deep hand lines, 45. long hand lines, 80. the palms and soles marked with śrīvatsa, svastika, nadyāvarta, and lalita symbols
3. he has projecting heels (āyatapaṇhi),	
4. he has long fingers and toes (dīghaṅgulī),	1. finger-nails of copper colour, 2. smooth finger-nails, 3. prominent finger-nails, 4. rounded finger-nails, 5. slender fingers, 6. well developed fingers,
5. he has soft and tender hands and feet (mudutalunahatthapāda),	42. delicate hands like cotton,
6. he has webbed hands and feet (jālāhatthapāda),	
7. he has prominent ankles (ussanpāda),	7. concealed veins, 8. unknotted veins, 9. concealed ankles,
8. his legs are like an antelope's (enijaṅghā),	
9. standing and without bending he can touch his knees with either hand (thatakova anonamanto ubhoḥi hattehi jaṅṅukāni parimasati),	
10. his male organ is concealed in a sheath (kosohitavatthaguhya),	24. sex organ complete,
11. his complexion is like the colour of gold (suvanṇavaṇṇa),	
12. his skin is so delicately smooth that no dust cleaves to his body (sukhumachavi),	
13. the hairs of his body grow singly, one to each pore (ekekalomā),	

14. the hairs of his body turn upwards, curling to the right (uddhaggaloma),	
15. his body grows straight (brahmujjugatta),	18. rounded body, 19. smooth body, 20. regular body, 21. pure body, 22. tender body, 23. stainless body,
16. he has seven protuberances (sattussada),	41. body free from freckles and black spots,
17. the upper part of his body is like that of a lion (sīhapubbaddhakāya),	27. youthful body, 28. energetic body, 29. lofty body, 30. well-composed body,
18. there is no indentation between his shoulders (citantaramsa),	25. body has broad and graceful limbs,
19. his proportions have the symmetry of the banyan tree (nigrodhaparimaṇḍala),	31. well-proportioned limbs and their parts,
20. his bust is equally rounded (samavattakkhandha),	33. rounded sides of the body, 34. smooth sides of the body, 35. not bulging sides of the body,
21. his taste is supremely acute (rasagghasaggi),	
22. his jaw is like a lion's (sīhahanu),	
23. he has forty teeth (cattālīsadanta),	
24. his teeth are equal (samadanta),	53. rounded canine teeth, 54. sharp canine teeth, 57. regular canine teeth,
25. his teeth are closely set (avivaradanta),	56. even canine teeth,
26. his white teeth are lustrous (susukkadāṭha),	55. white canine teeth,
27. his tongue is long and slender (pahūta-jivhā),	46. not too elongated mouth, 47. the mouth resembling the bimba (fruit), 48. pliable tongue, 49. slender tongue, 50. red tongue,
28. he has a divine voice like the karaviṅka bird (brahmasvara),	51. voice of a roaring elephant or thundering clouds, 52. articulate, attractive and gentle speech,
29. his eyes are blue-black (abhinīlanetta),	32. clear and pure sight,
30. he has the eye-lashes like those of a cow (gopakhuma),	60. clear eyes, 61. large eyes, 62. thick eyelashes, 63. (the white and dark section of) the eyes beautifully (contrast) like the petals of a white and dark lotus, 64. long eyebrows, 65. soft eyebrows, 66. even eyebrows, 67. smooth eyebrows,
31. between the eyebrows is a hairy mole, white and like soft cotton down (uṇṇā),	
32. there is a protuberance on his head (unhīsasīsa).	
	11. gait of a lion, 12. gait of an elephant, 13. gait of swan, 14. gait of a bull, 15. gait of swaying towards the right, 16. pleasing gait, 17. steady gait,



	36. slim abdomen, 37. deep navel, 38. clockwise coiled navel,
	58. prominent nose, 59. Neat nose,
	68. thick and long ears, 69. even ears, 70. unimpaired hearing,
	71. well-formed forehead, 72. broad forehead, 73. well-developed head, 77. undishevelled/untousled head,
	74. black hair like that of the black bee, 75. thick hair, 76. soft hair, 78. pliable hair, 79. fragrant hair,
	26. even pace, 39. agreeable in all respects, 40. pure conduct,

From the above table, it is clear that most of the items in the list of the eighty minor marks are related to the thirty-two major marks. So the eighty minor marks are nothing but a detailed description of the Buddha's bodily features. A question is put forward in the *Vibhāṣā* as to where the eighty minor marks are to be found.<sup>52</sup> The Sarvāstivādins explained that they are amongst the major marks, but not mixed with them, just as the flowers in the forest make the trees distinctive. This argument also suggests that other schools did not agree with the Sarvāstivādins with regard to the eighty minor marks. However, these attributes became significant at a later period and were accepted by the remaining Buddhist traditions such as Mahāyāna and Theravāda.

The list of the eighty minor marks is found neither in the *Nikāyas* nor in the *Āgamas*. However, the term "eighty minor marks" is mentioned in the Chinese translation of the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* of the \**Dīrghāgama*, and the \**Aśokasūtra* of the \**Samyuktāgama*.<sup>53</sup> It is clear that the term 'eighty minor marks' is a later interpolation in the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* in the \**Dīrghāgama*, because it is not mentioned in either the Pāli version or in the other three independent Chinese translations of the *sūtra*.<sup>54</sup> The \**Aśokasūtra* was obviously later inserted into the \**Samyuktāgama* because, first, the entire *sūtra* talks about King Aśoka, and secondly, there are two similar independent works in the Taisho *Tripitaka* which are later works: the \**Aśokasūtra* and the *Biography of Aśoka*. Therefore, the eighty minor marks were not originally in both the \**Dīrghāgama* and the \**Samyuktāgama*, but had been added

later in the course of transmission. There is no mention of the term in the \**Madhyamāgama*. Amongst the four Āgamas, only the *Ekottara* contains the term ‘eighty minor marks’ thirteen times but without enumerating the eighty items.<sup>55</sup> In some places, the *Ekottara* also mentions the golden complexion and the light apart from the terms ‘thirty-two major’ and ‘eighty minor marks’.<sup>56</sup> This text had been revised by the early schools and, according to some scholars such as Yinshun, was even influenced by Mahāyāna teachings.<sup>57</sup> Yinshun provides us with two pieces of textual evidence. First, in the Introductory Chapter of the Chinese \**Ekottarāgama*, it says, “The Bhagavan delivered the Dharma in various ways, while the bodhisattvas made up their minds to learn the Mahāyāna.”<sup>58</sup> Second, it is said in Chapter XVIII: “Śāriputra, the Tathāgata says that there are four unfathomable things which the Hīnayānists do not understand.”<sup>59</sup> The term ‘eighty minor marks’, therefore, was probably interpolated into the original version of the *Ekottara* by the transmitters according to the teaching of their own school after the split of Buddhism into different schools. This is because the term ‘eighty minor marks’ is not found in the four Pāli *Nikāyas*.

The earliest presence of the term ‘eighty minor marks’ is found in the Pāli *Apadāna* and the first part of the *Milindapañha* discussed above.<sup>60</sup> The more frequent appearance of the term is in biographical *sūtras* of the Buddha as well as in the Mahāyāna *sūtras* and treatises. The first ever list fully listed the eighty minor marks is found in two biographical *sūtras* of the Buddha. They are the \**Abhiniṣkramaṇasūtra*, which was translated into Chinese by Jñānagupta in 587 CE, and the \**Vaipulyamahāvvyūhasūtra*, which is a translation of the *Lalitavistara* made by Divākara in 683 CE.<sup>61</sup> Although the term “eighty minor marks” is mentioned once in another early Chinese translation of the *Lalitavistara*, entitled the \**Samantaprabhāṣasūtra*, made by Dharmarakṣa in 308 CE, the eighty items are not given.<sup>62</sup> The list of eighty items is also found in the Sanskrit version of the *Lalitavistara*. It is possible that later the list had been inserted into both the \**Vaipulyamahāvvyūhasūtra* and the

Sanskrit version of the *Lalitavistara*, which had perhaps been revised by the Mahāyānistis since the title uses the word *vaipulya*.

The \**Abhiniṣkramaṇasūtra* is the most comprehensive biography of the Buddha available to us. H. Nakamura is of the opinion that this work was transmitted by the Dharmaguptaka School.<sup>63</sup> However, at the end of the text it is said that the Mahāsāṃghikas named it the *Great Matter (Mahāvastu)*; the Sarvāstivādins called it the *Great Adornment (Mahāvīyūha or Lalitavistara)*; the Kāśyapiyas entitled it the *Buddha's Former Nidāna or Avadāna*; the Dharmaguptakas called it *Śākyamuni's Former Practice (Buddhacarita)* and the Mahīśāsakas named it the *Root of Vinayapiṭaka (Vinayapiṭakamūla)*.<sup>64</sup> The text itself also mentions the opinions of different schools on certain issues. So it seems that this work did not belong to any particular school mentioned in the *sūtra*, but was shared by all with some variations on minor points. Apart from this, the \**Abhiniṣkramaṇasūtra* displays many Mahāyānistic elements. First, it mentions Vairocana Buddha at the beginning.<sup>65</sup> It further mentions skilful means (*upāyakauśalya*) as a method by which one teaches sentient beings by manifesting in various respect-inspiring images according to the inclinations of different beings and by which one achieves the dharma of all Buddhas.<sup>66</sup> We are inclined to think that this work was shared by most early Indian Buddhist schools and later revised by the Mahāyānistis or the Mahāsāṃghika-Mahāyānistis.

In the Theravāda tradition, the list of eighty items is only found in the sub-commentaries such as the *Milindapañhaṭṭikā* and the *Jinālaṅkāraṭṭikā* (or *Jinālaṅkāraṇṇanā*).<sup>67</sup> T. Endo, who has made a study of the concept of the Buddha in the Pāli commentaries, is of the opinion that the Theravādins adopted the concept of *aśīti-anuvyañjanāni* from another early Buddhist school and later adopted the list in its entirety.<sup>68</sup> This Buddhist school is perhaps none other than the Sarvāstivāda.

From the above investigation of the eighty minor marks, it seems that the term appears in the Buddhist literature quite early, but the list of eighty items is frequently

mentioned in biographical *sūtras* of the Buddha, which display certain Mahāyāna elements. It is mentioned in the MPPŚ that the Sarvāstivādins believed in the eighty minor marks.<sup>69</sup> If the eighty minor marks had been originated by the Mahāyānists, then the Sarvāstivādins would probably not have accepted them as they completely repudiated the Mahāyāna teachings.<sup>70</sup> The eighty minor marks must closely be related to the Sarvāstivāda school. This is also supported by our analysis of the \**Nāgasena Bhikṣu Sūtra* as discussed above. It was probably the Sarvāstivādins who created the eighty minor marks on the basis of the thirty-two major marks, and subsequently they became very significant. It was then the Mahāyānists as well as the Theravādins who adopted and incorporated them into their attributes of the Buddha.

### (3) The Golden Complexion

The golden complexion is one of the thirty-two major marks. From our examination of the *sūtras* and commentaries, we have no clue why this one is taken out and listed independently as one of the four categories of the physical attributes of the Buddha. Perhaps we may surmise that this is singled out from the thirty-two marks as a most easily visible sign. As we have seen, much importance was attached to it, and the golden rays radiating from the complexion exceeded all golden lights and the skin of the Buddha was so smooth that no dust cleaved to his body.

### (4) The One-Fathom Halo

The earliest appearance of the term 'one-fathom halo' is found in the *Buddhavaṃsa* and the *Vimānavatthu* of the *Khuddakanikāya*.<sup>71</sup> However, the term is considered post-canonical.<sup>72</sup> According to the *Vibhāṣā*, the Sarvāstivādins named the one-fathom halo 'superior light'.<sup>73</sup> The reasons are given in the *Vibhāṣā* as follows. First, the Buddha has a perpetually radiating light from his body. Unlike other kinds of light that are not steadfast, this light is always there so it is named 'superior light'. Second, there is a one-fathom halo around the body of the Buddha so no dust and

insects can approach him. Third, the Buddha has three kinds of light that outshine all other kinds of light. They are: (1) the bodily golden light which outshines mountains of gold, (2) the white light of the Buddha's teeth which outshines mountains of snow and (3) the all-pervading pure light of the Buddha's wisdom which destroys all heretical theories. All other kinds of light disappear when they encounter these three kinds of light. Thus it is named superior light.<sup>74</sup>

This attribute originally is not found in the list of the thirty-two marks in the *Nikāyas* and the *Āgamas*, but later it appears as one of them in the biographical *sūtras* such as the *\*Atītapratyutpannahetuphalasūtra*, and the *\*Samadattamahārājasūtra*.<sup>75</sup> It is also found in the list in the *\*Saṅghabhedavastu* of the *\*Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya* and many Mahāyāna *sūtras* such as the *\*Prajñāpāramitā*.<sup>76</sup> However, according to the *Vibhāṣā*, the Sarvāstivāda considered this attribute as a separate quality of the Buddha. The compilers of the *Vibhāṣā* commented on this issue and said that although it does not belong to the thirty-two marks, all the Buddhas have a superior light with a one-fathom halo that radiates from their bodies at all times.<sup>77</sup>

Apart from the one-fathom halo, the *Buddhavaṃsa* also mentions that the Buddha had a hundred rays (*śataraśmī*) of six colours radiating from his body.<sup>78</sup> The commentaries such as the *Sāratthappakāsinī* further explain the rays of the Buddha in detail, saying that they emanate from six parts of the Buddha's body: the front, the back, the right and left hands, the hairs of the head, and the flat part of his soles.<sup>79</sup> However, this attribute is not included in the list of the thirty-two major marks in the Theravāda tradition.

It is significant that along the same line of thought, the authors of the *\*Prajñāpāramitāsūtras* further developed it as a supreme attribute of the Buddha. It is said in the *\*Prajñāpāramitāsūtras* that before the Buddha started to preach, he first emitted rays from all parts of his body, including the pores of his hairs, the supreme light, which illuminated three thousand great world systems. Those who encounter such light would attain full enlightenment.<sup>80</sup> Then the Mahāyānists made the supreme



light as a special attribute of the Buddha. This will be discussed in the seventh chapter.

#### (5) Other Physical Attributes

Adorned with all these attributes and qualities, the physical body of the Buddha is perfect according to the Sarvāstivādins. No one could have meditated upon the uncleanness of the human body when observing the physical body of the Buddha, because the external appearance of the *rūpakāya* of the Buddha was so clear, bright and subtle that one could not become disgusted.<sup>81</sup> There was no scar on the *rūpakāya* even after Devadatta injured the Buddha's feet, because of the merit accumulated in numerous *kalpas* of the past.<sup>82</sup>

The Sarvāstivādins also maintained that the Buddha had immeasurable physical strength like Nārāyana, the hero of divine power, in spite of their view that the Buddha was a human being.<sup>83</sup> Regarding the strength of Nārāyana, it is stated in the *Vibhāṣā* after quoting contending opinions that in fact it is limitless like mental strength. However, the physical strength of the Buddha reached its height at the age of twenty-five and remained so until the age of fifty, after which it gradually declined. In the *Āgamas* we find an independent *sūtra* entitled the *Sūtra on the Wrestlers Who Were Trying to Move a Mountain*, which describes the immeasurable physical strength of the Buddha in the same way as it is described in the *Vibhāṣā*.<sup>84</sup> Though this *sūtra* may have been compiled quite late, it nevertheless suggests that the Sarvāstivādins had made their statement on the basis of the *sūtras*. However, other schools such as the Mahāsāṃghikas maintained that the physical strength of the Buddha had never decreased, not unlike his mental strength. The Sarvāstivādins maintained that it is only the strength of the *dharmakāya* that does not decrease, while the physical strength of the *rūpakāya* decreases because the heterogeneous effects produced by heterogeneous causes (*vipāka-phala*) of *karma* decrease. The *rūpakāya* will come to an end when the *vipāka-phala* is exhausted.<sup>85</sup> Therefore, the Sarvāstivādins

considered that harming the physical body of the Buddha is only the second among the five grave sins while splitting the Saṃgha is counted as the first because all Buddhas respect the *dharmakāya*. Shedding the blood of the Buddha is only harming the *rūpakāya* while causing a schism within the Saṃgha is seen as the destruction of the *dharmakāya*.<sup>86</sup>

### 3. The Dharmakāya

The notion of the *dharmakāya*, which in early Buddhism means the teaching of the Buddha in general, was interpreted by the Sarvāstivāda as consisting of the eighteen exclusive *dharmas* (*āveṇika*). They are the ten powers, the four kinds of intrepidity, the three foundations of mindfulness, and great compassion, which are the fruits of the immeasurable merit accumulated during three *asaṃkhyeyakalpas*. These qualities are explained in detail in the *Vibhāṣā* as being the mental strength of the Buddha.<sup>87</sup> The origins of these qualities of the Buddha are quite early and are traced in both the Pāli *Mahāsihanādasutta* and the Chinese *Āgamas*.

The earliest development of the concept of the *dharmakāya* is perhaps revealed in the first Chinese translation of the three *Vibhāṣās* as discussed at the beginning of this chapter. It is stated in the *Vibhāṣā*, “The *sūtras* delivered by the Buddha state that there are eighty thousand *dharmakāyas*. Question: what quantifies the *dharmakāya*? According to one theory, one *sūtra* is considered a *dharmakāya* and such a *kāya* is counted as the measurement (of a *dharmakāya*). Thus, the same measurement should apply to all the eighty thousand. According to another theory, the *sūtras* state that mental concentration is a form of measure of a *dharmakāya*. For instance, the *sūtras* speak of the *prahāṇāni*, *ṛddhipādās*, *indriyas*, *balas*, *bodhyaṅgānis* and *mārgas*. Each of these is considered as a form of measurement of a *dharmakāya*. Thus it adds up to eighty thousand. But the counters (of words) say that eight words make a sentence and thirty-two syllables consist of a *śloka*.

Five hundred thousand, again five thousand (*ślokas*).

Five hundred thousand and five thousand (*ślokas*) are the quantity of a *dharmakāya*.”<sup>88</sup>

This account suggests that in the earliest stage, probably before Sarvāstivāda development, there existed many different theories concerning the concept of the *dharmakāya*. In the *Nikāyas* and the *Āgamas*, it is only stated that he who sees the *dharmakāya* sees the Buddha. It is likely that the immediate disciples of the Buddha understood the precise meaning of the term *dharmakāya* as the teachings of the Buddha. However, later followers took it literally as the scripture that contains his teachings and disputed the quantification of the *dharmakāya*. On this matter, the Sarvāstivādins differed and stated that the eighty thousand *dharmakāyas* mentioned in the *sūtras* are all in the five *skandhas* of *śīla*, *samādhi*, *prajñā*, *vimukti* and *vimukti-jñāna-darśana*. They were thus held to constitute the five divisions of the *dharmakāya*.<sup>89</sup> Sometimes the Sarvāstivādins also explained the *dharmakāya* as consisting of three divisions: *śīla*, *samādhi*, and *prajñā*.<sup>90</sup> This is perhaps the early phase of the Sarvāstivāda concept of the *dharmakāya*, and based on this, they finally developed the eighteen exclusive *dharmas*.

The question of the eighteen exclusive *dharmas* of the Buddha is a complicated issue because there are two lists, one pertaining to the Hīnayāna (mainly the Sarvāstivāda) and the other to the Mahāyāna. The Sarvāstivāda list is a collection of attributes of the Buddha taken from the early *sūtras*. The ten powers and the four kinds of intrepidity are found in the *Mahāsīhanādasutta* of the *Majjhimanikāya* as well as in the Chinese translations of the *Dīrgha*, *Samyukta* and *\*Ekottarāgamas*.<sup>91</sup> The three foundations of mindfulness are mentioned in the *Salāyatanavibhaṅgasutta* of the *Majjhimanikāya* as well as in the corresponding Chinese translation in the *\*Madhyamāgama*,<sup>92</sup> while compassion is mentioned in numerous places. The Mahāyāna list of the eighteen exclusive *dharmas* is completely different from the above.<sup>93</sup>

Let us first clarify the term “eighteen exclusive *dharmas*” before proceeding to a



detailed discussion of its contents. The term is never mentioned in the *Nikāyas* and the *Āgamas*. It is only found in an independent translation of the *\*Brahmāyuhṣūtra* of the *\*Madhyamāgama*.<sup>94</sup> A comparison of the independent translation of the *\*Brahmāyuhṣūtra* and its counterpart in the *\*Madhyamāgama* shows that the term was interpolated into the *sūtra* later because there is no mention of such a term in the original version of the *Āgama*. The independent *sūtra* contains two stock passages which are not found in its counterpart: “the thirty-two major marks and the eighty minor marks of the Buddha” and “the ten powers, the four kinds of intrepidity and the eighteen exclusive *dharmas*”.

We can see that firstly, these stock passages often appear in the post canonical literature, but never in the early *sūtras*. Secondly, apart from the term “eighteen exclusive *dharmas*”, the term “eighty minor marks” is never mentioned in the *Nikāyas* and the *Āgamas*, but is often found in later works as we have already seen. Thirdly, apart from the above evidence, the independent translation also mentions that a five-coloured light comes out from the mouth of the Buddha, circles his body three times and then returns into his mouth. This attribute of the Buddha is also not mentioned in its counterpart in the *\*Madhyamāgama*. Therefore, it is probable that the term “eighteen exclusive *dharmas*” was interpolated into the independent *sūtra* when the *sūtra* was taken out from the *\*Madhyamāgama* and independently transmitted. However, the transmitters of the *\*Madhyamāgama* were faithful to their tradition and had kept it relatively uncorrupted even though the *\*Madhyamāgama* was translated into Chinese a century after the independent *sūtra*. Therefore, the *\*Brahmāyuhṣūtra* in the *\*Madhyamāgama* mentions neither the term “eighteen exclusive *dharmas*” nor the term “eighty minor marks”. It is only in the independent translation of it that the term “eighteen exclusive *dharmas*” is mentioned.

The term “eighteen exclusive *dharmas*” is also mentioned in three of the biographical *sūtras* of the Buddha, but scholars are unsure as to which list it refers to although an analysis suggests that these three *sūtras* are either influenced by or belong

to the Mahāyāna. These three biographical *sūtras* are the *Dafangbianfobaoenjing* (*Sūtra* of the Great Skilful Means [*mahā-upāya*] by Which the Buddha Recompenses the Favour [of his parents]), the \**Mahāyānamahākaraṇāpūṇḍarīkasūtra* and the \**Vaipulyamahāvīyūhasūtra*. Judging from the titles, they are all Mahāyāna *sūtras* since the terms such as *mahā-upāya* and *vaipulya* are Mahāyānistic. They further mention names of Mahāyāna bodhisattvas such as Avalokiteśvara and Mañjuśrī.<sup>95</sup> Since they are Mahāyāna *sūtras*, it can be inferred that the eighteen exclusive *dharma*s mentioned are those of the Mahāyāna tradition.

T. Endo is of the opinion that the Theravādins were the first to formulate the eighteen exclusive *dharma*s, which roughly correspond to the Mahāyāna list.<sup>96</sup> The date of the first appearance of the term was between the end of the first and second centuries CE, as the term *aṭṭhādasabuddhadhamma* is mentioned twice for the first time in the second part of the *Milindapañha*. According to K. Mizuno, the second part of the *Milindapañha* from page 89 to the end was composed in Sri Lanka after the end of the first century CE.<sup>97</sup> But T. Endo thinks the so-called Mahāyāna list came into being first.

There are two problems concerning the term *aṭṭhādasabuddhadhamma* in the *Milindapañha*. First, it is not clear whether the term refers to the Hīnayāna list or to that of the Mahāyāna. Second, the date of the composition of the second portion of the *Milindapañha* is controversial, and some scholars such as H. Nakamura are of the opinion that it was completed between 250 CE and the time of Buddhaghosa, as T. Endo also indicates.<sup>98</sup> The earliest list of the eighteen *dharma*s of the Theravāda is found only in Buddhaghosa's commentary on the *Dīghanikāya*, but this list never became the standard.<sup>99</sup> It is the list found in Dhammapāla's sub-commentary of the *Dīghanikāya*, a work of the sixth or seventh century CE, that became standard.

We think that the Hīnayāna list of the Sarvāstivādins may have come into being first. There are some pieces of evidence to support this assertion. Firstly, the Sarvāstivāda list of the eighteen exclusive *dharma*s is mentioned in all three versions

of the Chinese translation of the *Vibhāṣā* as discussed above. The original version of the *Vibhāṣā*, according to Yinshun, may have been composed in the second century CE, after king Kaniṣka and before the composition of the MPPŚ.<sup>100</sup> This brings the date of the Sarvāstivāda list closer to that of the Theravāda school if we accept Endo's assertion. Secondly, neither the term "eighteen exclusive *dharmas*" nor the Mahāyāna list is mentioned in the early Chinese translations of the \**Prajñāpāramitāsūtras* such as the \**Aṣṭasāhasrikā*, and two versions of the \**Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā*: the *Fangguang* and the *Guangzan*. The full Mahāyāna list is mentioned in both translations of Kumārajīva and Xuanzang of the \**Prajñāpāramitāsūtras*.<sup>101</sup> Therefore, the Mahāyāna list must have been introduced into the \**Prajñāpāramitāsūtras* later. The Mahāyāna list must have come into being probably in the third or the fourth century CE as the \**Aṣṭasāhasrikā* was translated in the second century CE and Kumārajīva made his translation at the beginning of the fifth century. Thirdly, the Sarvāstivāda list of the eighteen exclusive *dharmas*, as discussed above, was not a new creation, but only a collection taken from early *sūtras*. This was a natural development that occurred when the Sarvāstivādins analysed the teachings of the Buddha in the early *sūtras*, while the items in the Mahāyāna list represent a further development. The author of the MPPŚ argues that while the eighteen *dharmas* of the Sarvāstivādins are not exclusive to the Buddha, but are shared with *pratyekabuddhas* and *arhants*, the Mahāyāna list of the *dharmas* is exclusive to the Buddha.<sup>102</sup> Therefore, it was most probably the Sarvāstivādins who first collected the eighteen items from the early *sūtras* and named the collection as the "eighteen exclusive *dharmas*". The term *aṭṭhādasabuddhadhamma* in the *Milindapañha* may not refer to the Mahāyāna list but to the Sarvāstivāda list. The Mahāyānists created another list of eighteen exclusive *dharmas* of the Buddha because they did not agree with the Sarvāstivādins. They argued that the eighteen *dharmas* of the Sarvāstivādins are not exclusive to the Buddhas but shared with other liberated beings. According to Har Dayal, this occurred in the third century CE.<sup>103</sup>

Now let us examine the four categories of the eighteen exclusive *dharma*s as discussed in the *Vibhāṣā*.<sup>104</sup>

### 1. *The Ten Powers*

The essence of the ten powers is explained as wisdom because the mental power of the Buddha is wisdom.<sup>105</sup> They are called powers because they are non-succumbing, non-yielding, indestructible, non-destroying, unchangeable, non-submissive, but are all enlightening, enduring, strong, superior, and can overpower others. Therefore, though the *pratyekabuddhas* and the *śrāvakas* also have the eighth and the ninth knowledges, these are not named powers because they do not have the above characteristics. Twenty different aspects of the ten powers are explained in detail in the *Vibhāṣā*.<sup>106</sup> This explanation suggests that probably by the third century CE, the Sarvāstivāda Abhidharmikas had already become extremely meticulous.

### 2. *The Four Kinds of Intrepidity*

The four kinds of intrepidity also have wisdom as their essence because the first intrepidity corresponds to the first power, the second to the tenth power, the third to the second power, and the fourth to the seventh power.<sup>107</sup> They are named intrepidity because they are non-timid, non-terrified, non-collapsible, but brave, stable, purified and white in the sense of being pure. The twenty-one aspects are explained again in detail in the *Vibhāṣā* in relation to the four kinds of intrepidity.<sup>108</sup>

If the ten powers and the four kinds of intrepidity all have wisdom as their essence, then what is the difference between them? The Sarvāstivādins explained that each intrepidity has ten powers and each power also has the four kinds of intrepidity so that it makes forty powers and forty kinds of intrepidity. However, they are different in that the qualities such as strength, stability, wisdom, invincibility are powers, while the qualities such as bravery, eloquence, fearlessness, or their effects

are intrepidity.<sup>109</sup>

### 3. *The Three Foundations of Mindfulness*

The three foundations of mindfulness are (1) when his disciples listen, accept, and practise his teaching unanimously and respectfully, the Tathāgata experiences neither joy nor satisfaction, but remains indifferent instead, in full mindfulness and awareness. (2) When his disciples do not respect, do not hear, do not accept, and do not practice his teaching unanimously, the Tathāgata does not experience displeasure nor impatience, but remains indifferent, in full mindfulness and awareness. (3) When some of his disciples hear, accept, and practise his teaching respectfully, while others do not hear, do not accept and do not practise his teaching, the Buddha does not experience joy or displeasure but remains indifferent, in full mindfulness and awareness. These three foundations of mindfulness are also included in the first of the ten powers because the Buddha understands the inclinations of beings, has eliminated hatred and attachment, and has achieved the practice of emptiness (*śūnyatā*).<sup>110</sup>

### 4. *The Great Compassion*

The term “great compassion” (*mahākaruṇā*) was most probably first introduced by the Sarvāstivādins so that the compassion of the Buddha could be distinguished from ordinary compassion. The *\*Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* (*Kośa*) of Vasubandhu speaks of five reasons as to why the compassion of the Buddha is termed “great compassion”, but both the *\*Abhidharma(piṭaka)prakaraṇaśāsanāśāstra* and the *\*Abhidharmayāyānusāraśāstra* of Saṅghabhadra list four more reasons in addition to the five standard reasons given in the former text by other Sarvāstivāda teachers.<sup>111</sup> However, Saṅghabhūti’s translation of the *Vibhāṣā*, which is the earliest, gives seven reasons, while Buddhavarma’s translation, which is the second, and Xuanzang’s translation, which is the latest and longest, give nine similar reasons.<sup>112</sup> The following is a comparative table of the reasons given in the above texts.

Table II, Comparison of the reasons for the establishment of *Mahākaruṇā*

<i>Kośa</i> of Vasubandhu	Two treatises of Saṅghabhadra	The <i>Vibhāṣā</i> of Saṅghabhūti	The <i>Vibhāṣā</i> of Xuanzang
1) By reason of its factor ( <i>sambhāra</i> ); it is produced in fact by a great provision of merit and knowledge.	1) The same as left column.  Others: It is produced by the great treasure of merit. It is obtained through great endeavour ( <i>prayoga</i> ).	1) By reason of its cultivation, it is the Buddha who makes offerings with his most precious things, not like a <i>śrāvaka</i> who makes one offering to one person or a <i>pratyekabuddha</i> who makes several offerings.  3) By reason of its great skill in means, it is achieved through practising hundreds and thousands of austerities in three <i>asaṃkhyeya kalpas</i> , not like the <i>śrāvakas</i> such as Śāripūtra, who achieved <i>bodhi</i> by practising earnestly for sixty <i>kalpas</i> only and the <i>pratyekabuddhas</i> who achieved <i>bodhi</i> by practising earnestly for a hundred <i>kalpas</i> .	4) By reason of its cultivation, it is achieved through the practice of making offerings, the practice of observing precepts, the practice of tolerance, the practice of energy, the practice of meditation, and the practice of wisdom. It is not like the <i>śrāvakas</i> and <i>pratyekabuddhas</i> who achieved small fruit by practising offering once or by observing precepts for a night or by meditating on a verse of four lines.  5) By reason of its earnest endeavour ( <i>prayoga</i> ), it is achieved through practising hundreds and thousands of austerities in three <i>asaṃkhyeya kalpas</i> , not like the <i>śrāvakas</i> who achieved <i>bodhi</i> by practising earnestly for only sixty <i>kalpas</i> and the <i>pratyekabuddhas</i> who achieved <i>bodhi</i> by practising earnestly for a hundred <i>kalpas</i> . <sup>113</sup>
2) By reason of its aspects, of the modality under which it grasps things: it considers things as painful by reason of the threefold suffering.	2) The same as left column.  Others: It can eliminate the grievous suffering of sentient beings.	5) By reason of its saving beings from the chasm, the Buddha, for example, saves beings from the <i>pañca gataya</i> .	1) By reason of its eliminating grievous suffering, it eliminates suffering of the beings in hell, hungry ghosts and animals by taking them out of hell and giving them the happiness of human beings and gods.  2) By reason of its eliminating <i>kleśa</i> , it takes sentient beings out of the mire of <i>kleśa</i> and leads them to the path of the fruit of the saint.  7) By reason of its abandoning great happiness and saving people from suffering, it is by great compassion that the Tathāgata abandons the unlimited, superior happiness and saves beings from suffering through wandering in

			the ten cardinal directions.
3) By reason of the object, for it has for its object all beings in the Three <i>dhātus</i> .	3) The same as left column.	4) By reason of its superior benefit, it can bring people to the path of Buddha, <i>pratyekabuddha</i> , <i>śrāvaka</i> and other worldly benefits, such as wealth and birth in heaven.	3) By reason of its superior benefit, it teaches sentient beings to destroy the three evil deeds and to cultivate the three wholesome deeds so that they may earn various benefits, from obtaining wealth to becoming Mahābrahma and even attaining the final <i>bodhi</i> .
4) By reason of its equality, for it is equally concerned with the happiness and benefit of all beings.	4) The same as left column.	7) By reason of its excellence, it saves sentient beings with various skills and means through manifesting in different forms.	8) By reason of its skill in means, it saves sentient beings with various skills and means by manifesting in different forms. Though the Buddha was in a superior position he helps them all find liberation.
5) By reason of its excellence, for no other compassion which has arisen surpasses it.	5) The same as left column. Others: It is achieved through the body of a <i>mahāpurusa</i> .	2) By reason of its dependence, it arises only in the body of a <i>mahāpurusa</i> who has the thirty-two major marks, the eighty minor marks, and the one-fathom rays radiating from his body. His body is golden in colour, and he has the voice like that of the karaviṅka bird. 6) By reason of it being a motivation of great equanimity ( <i>upekṣā</i> ), it benefits sentient beings by motivating the Buddha to help liberate them when he is in a state of the great equanimity. In such a state the Buddha is indifferent to everything and nothing can motivate him except great compassion.	6) By reason of its dependence, it arises only in the body of a <i>mahāpurusa</i> who has the thirty-two major marks, the eighty minor marks, and the one fathom long rays radiating from the body, the <i>uṣṇīṣa</i> , and whose body is golden in colour, not like the <i>śrāvakas</i> and <i>pratyekabuddhas</i> . 9) By reason of it being a motivation of great equanimity ( <i>upekṣā</i> ), it benefits sentient beings by motivating the Buddha to help liberate them when he is in a state of great equanimity. In such a state the Buddha is indifferent to everything and nothing can motivate him except great compassion.

The above comparison shows clearly that the reasons given in the two *Vibhāṣā* texts are not given in an orderly fashion or with sound reasoning. In fact, the lists show an increase in the number of reasons from seven found in Saṅghabhūti's translation to nine of Xuanzang's translation. By contrast, the five reasons given in the *Kośa* are highly condensed and synthesized. It seems that after the creation of the term "great compassion" of the Buddha, the Sarvāstivādins continued to develop it but finally the reasons were condensed into five. This concurs perfectly with the Buddhist traditional view that Vasubandhu wrote the *Kośa* after he had summarized the six commentaries and the *Vibhāṣā* of the Sarvāstivāda School.<sup>114</sup>

Compassion (*karuṇā*) is amply present in many places in the early *sūtras*, and the Buddha is described as one who is fully accomplished in both wisdom and compassion. However, the Sarvāstivādins distinguished the compassion of the Buddha from ordinary compassion and named it 'great compassion'. They further explained that the great compassion differs from ordinary compassion in eight ways. Since there are some discrepancies in the English translation of the \**Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* made by Leo M. Pruden, I reproduce here a summary from the *Vibhāṣā*.<sup>115</sup> (1) With respect to its nature, ordinary compassion is absence of hatred, whereas great compassion is absence of ignorance. (2) With respect to its scope, ordinary compassion takes the form of ordinary suffering, whereas great compassion takes on the form of a threefold suffering. (3) With respect to its object, ordinary compassion is concerned with the beings of the *kāmadhātu* only, whereas great compassion is concerned with beings of the three *dhātus*. (4) With respect to its level (*bhūmi*), ordinary compassion is on the level of the ten *dhyānas*: the four *dhyānas*, the four stages above the four *dhyānas*, *antaradhyāna* and the *kāmahūmi*, whereas great compassion is of the level of the fourth *dhyāna* only. (5) With respect to its support, ordinary compassion arises in *śrāvakas*, *pratyekabuddhas*, Buddhas as well as ordinary people (*pṛthagjana*), whereas great compassion arises only in Buddhas. (6)



With respect to its acquisition, ordinary compassion is obtained through detachment from the *kāmadhātu* and the third *dhyāna*, whereas great compassion is obtained through detachment from the *bhavāgra* only. (7) With respect to saving (others), ordinary compassion arouses only sympathy for the act of liberating (others), whereas great compassion not only gives rise to sympathy but also accomplishes the act of liberating. (8) With respect to compassion, ordinary compassion is a partial of compassion, for it sympathizes only with beings who are suffering, whereas great compassion is turned toward all beings equally.<sup>116</sup>

According to the *Vibhāṣā*, great compassion is found in the fourth *dhyāna* in the *rūpadhātu* and arises depending on the body of a great man (*mahāpuruṣa*). While still in Jambudvīpa and thus in the *kāmadhātu*, it is not conjoined with *samādhi*. It accounts for all *dharmas* of the past, present, future; the good, the bad, and the neutral as well as all sentient beings in the three *dhātus*. It does not include however the sixteen aspects of the four noble truths. It is neither *śaikṣa* nor *āśaikṣa* and accounts for neither *śaikṣa* nor *āśaikṣa*. Rather it is of the path of contemplation of the Dharma and of the *saṃvṛtijñāna*. It is obtained either by *prayoga* or when the *kleśas* are eradicated.<sup>117</sup>

A question arises in the *Vibhāṣā* as to why it only speaks of great compassion, and not of great benevolence (*mahāmaitrī*), great joy (*mahāmuditā*) and great equanimity (*mahopekṣā*). The Sarvāstivādins explain that all the four should be spoken of as 'great' because (1) the merit of the Buddha is great, (2) it arises for the benefit and protection of sentient beings, (3) it arises out of his compassion towards sentient beings, and (4) it operates with a pure mind, equally and continuously directed towards sentient beings.<sup>118</sup>

These eighteen exclusive *dharmas*, except for the three foundations of mindfulness, were important factors for the Buddha when he preached the Dharma. On account of the ten powers, the Buddha established his own position. On account of the four kinds of intrepidity, the Buddha destroyed the arguments of the heretics and

on account of great compassion the Buddha's desire to preach was stimulated. Therefore by virtue of these fifteen factors the Buddha accomplished the act of preaching the Dharma. However, the three foundations of mindfulness are not like the powers, they are included in the list of the eighteen exclusive *dharmas* because they are conducive to the Buddha's abiding in equanimity.<sup>119</sup> Here the emphasis of the Sarvāstivādins is placed on the Buddha's quality as a teacher, which is in conformity with the teaching found in early Buddhist literature, the *Nikāyas* and the *Āgamas*.

Apart from these, the Sarvāstivādins also attributed to the Buddha other qualities such as the seven wonderful *dharmas* and the five holy wisdom *samādhis* which are also described as mental powers.<sup>120</sup> The seven wonderful *dharmas* are that the Buddha (1) knows the Dharma, (2) knows the meaning (of the Dharma), (3) knows the time (when to preach it), (4) knows the quantity (to preach), (5) knows it by himself (through experience), (6) knows the audience and (7) knows the difference between superiority and inferiority of the *puṅgala*. These seven wonderful *dharmas* are all under the first of the ten powers and belong to conventional knowledge.

The five holy wisdom *samādhis* are (1) the wisdom that arises from the inner attainment, knows that the *samādhi* is holy and without defilement. (2) The wisdom that arises from the inner attainment knows that the *samādhi* is not attained by the foolish, but is praised by the wise. (3) The wisdom that arises from the inner attainment knows that the *samādhi* is enduring happiness. (4) The wisdom that arises from the inner attainment knows that the *samādhi* is tranquil, wonderful, the way to calm, and can bring the mind to one-pointedness. (5) The wisdom that arises from inner attainment perceives that *samādhi* is attained through right mindfulness. The five wisdom *samādhis* are included in the first of the ten powers and all pertain to conventional knowledge.

#### 4. Other Attributes of the Buddha

There are other attributes of the Buddha that are discussed in the *Vibhāṣā*, but

cannot be classified as belonging to either the *rūpakāya* or the *dharmakāya*. First, according to the Sarvāstivādins, the smallest unit of time is *kṣaṇa*, the smallest unit of matter (*rūpa*) is an atom (*paramāṇu*) and the smallest unit of name (*nāma*) is one character.<sup>121</sup> The Buddha was omniscient in the sense that he knew the range of the names<sup>122</sup> as well as the quantity of one *kṣaṇa*.<sup>123</sup> In other words, the Buddha knew even the smallest things in the world.

Second, the Buddha did not have any dreams. Since dreams are caused by illusions and the Buddha had eliminated all illusions and habitual force, he was dreamless.<sup>124</sup> Kuiji, the eminent disciple of Xuanzang who translated the *Vibhāṣā*, further commented that undefiled ignorance is the cause of dreams. The Buddha had eliminated all the undefiled ignorance,<sup>125</sup> so he has no dreams.<sup>126</sup> However, according to the Sarvāstivādins, the Buddha did sleep because it was necessary for maintaining a good health of his physical body. That is why the *sūtras* say that the Buddha slept after meals, especially when the day was hot.<sup>127</sup> The Sarvāstivādins distinguished two kinds of sleep, namely defiled and undefiled. The sleep of the Buddhas, *pratyekabuddhas* and *arhats* is without defilement because they have eliminated *kleśas*. However, stream winners to *pratyekabuddhas* and even bodhisattvas have dreams. For instance, Gautama had five dreams before he left the palace, but his dreams were not illusions.<sup>128</sup>

Third, the Buddha could make wealth and Dharma offerings to all, but nobody can make a Dharma offering to the Buddha because no one can preach the Dharma to him.<sup>129</sup> *Pratyekabuddhas* can make both Dharma and wealth offerings to all, but not Dharma offerings to the Buddha. Śāriputra could make wealth offerings to all, but not Dharma offerings to the Buddhas and *pratyekabuddhas*. Maudgalyāyana could make wealth offerings to all, but not Dharma offerings to Buddhas, *pratyekabuddhas* and Śāriputra. Those who are not intelligent can make wealth offerings to all, but not Dharma offerings to the intelligent.

Fourth, the Buddha could utter one sound in one *kṣaṇa* of mind and could utter

one word in one *kṣaṇa* of sound because he was swift in verbal response, superior in speech, and had no voice defect.<sup>130</sup> While *pratyekabuddhas* and *śrāvakas* can also make one sound in one *kṣaṇa* of mind, they cannot speak one word in one *kṣaṇa* of sound and they need more *kṣaṇas* to utter a word. However, according to Vasumitra, the Sarvāstivādins held that the Buddha could not expound all doctrines with a single utterance, and not all his speeches were the act of preaching the Dharma, as he also uttered words that did not refer to the truth.<sup>131</sup>

### 5. The Duration of Becoming a Buddha

N. Dutt is of the opinion that the Sarvāstivādins did cherish Buddhahood as the goal of religious life because it is said in the *Divyāvadāna* that after a discourse, some aspired to *śrāvakabodhi*, some to *pratyekabodhi* and some to *samyaksambodhi*.<sup>132</sup> So it seems that the Mahāsāṃghikas were not alone in holding this position.

In early Buddhism, there was no mention of any definite time period or duration for one to become liberated as everything depended on individual effort. One can achieve liberation even during this lifetime if one follows the correct path and strives with zeal. But, this period of time has been prolonged or lengthened when the idea of Buddhahood was elevated to a position almost impossible to reach. The causes for such a development are both faith and reasoning based on the sayings and passages found in the early *sūtras*. As discussed in the first chapter, the birth of Gautama Buddha on earth was already seen in early Buddhism as an extraordinary event marked with supernatural occurrences. Faith together with the bodhisattva practices described in the *Jātaka* provided the foundation for future developments. Thus, the *Kośa* states that supreme *bodhi* is extremely difficult to obtain and achieved only by making great vows and long term practices.<sup>133</sup> In the *Vibhāṣā*, the duration for one to become a Buddha from the time of his initial resolution to his enlightenment is described as three *mahāsaṃkhyeyakalpas* plus another extra one hundred *kalpas*. During this immeasurable period of time, the bodhisattva practises the four *pāramitās*

instead of six in order to acquire the great accumulation of knowledge and merit through innumerable heroic deeds.<sup>134</sup>

The *Vibhāṣā* states that in these three *asaṃkhyeyakalpas*, “Upon the completion of the first *asaṃkhyeyakalpa*, the bodhisattva is not certain whether he is going to become a Buddha though he has practised various austerities. Upon the completion of the second *asaṃkhyeyakalpa*, he is not brave enough to make the announcement ‘I will become a Buddha’ though he knows that he is certain to become a Buddha. Upon the completion of the third *asaṃkhyeyakalpa* while practising for the wonderful marks (*lakṣaṇa*), he is certain to become a Buddha and also makes the lion’s roar: ‘I will become a Buddha’”.<sup>135</sup>

The duration of three *asaṃkhyeyakalpas* is probably a creation of the Sarvāstivādins because the Mahāyānists criticized it. It is said in the MPPŚ: “You said that during the first *asaṃkhyeyakalpa*, (the bodhisattva) did not know whether he would become a Buddha or not. ... Where did the Buddha say this, in what *sūtra*? Is it in the *Tripitaka* of the *śrāvakas* or in the Mahāyāna *sūtras*? The disciples of Kātyāyanīpūtra said: ‘Although the Buddha did not say it as recorded in the *Tripitaka*, yet logically, it should be so. The chapter on the bodhisattva in the *Abhidharmavibhāṣā* says so.’ Answer: the Mahāyāna *sūtras* state that the bodhisattva knows ‘I will become a Buddha’ in the first place when he makes a resolution.”<sup>136</sup> Again in the same treatise, the Mahāyānists criticized the Sarvāstivādins: “The Buddha said that (he) had accumulated merit in numerous *asaṃkhyeyakalpas* in order to save sentient beings. Why do you say three *asaṃkhyeyakalpas*?”<sup>137</sup> We can see that in the beginning, the Mahāyānists did not agree with the Sarvāstivādins concerning this theory, but later they accepted and adopted it.

How long is the period of three *asaṃkhyeyakalpas*? There is a long discussion in the *Vibhāṣā* in which nine different opinions are recorded, but there is no general agreement. According to both the *Kośa* and the \**Abhidharmanyāyānusārasāstra*, three *asaṃkhyeyakalpas* is in fact infinite.<sup>138</sup>

In the case of the present Śākyamuni Buddha, according to both the *Vibhāṣā* and the *Mahāvastu*, the Buddha as a bodhisattva made the vow in front of the ancient Śākyamuni Buddha that he would also become a Buddha in exactly the same way as the ancient Śākyamuni Buddha did. This would occur at the time when the life span of people was around a hundred years and when people suffered from birth, old age, illness and death in the world of the five defilements (*āyuhkaṣāya*, *kalpakaṣāya*, *kleśakaṣāya*, *dr̥ṣṭikaṣāya*, and *sattvakaṣāya*).<sup>139</sup> In the course of the first *asaṃkhyeyakalpa*, he met seventy five thousand Buddhas, the first was the ancient Śākyamuni and the last was Ratnaśikhin. In the second *asaṃkhyeyakalpa*, he met seventy six thousand Buddhas, Ratnaśikhin was the first and the last was Dīpaṃkara. In the third *asaṃkhyeyakalpa*, he met seventy seven thousand Buddhas, Dīpaṃkara was the first and Vipāśyin was the last. Then in the extra one hundred *kalpas*, which was the final period, the present Śākyamuni worked extremely hard so that he completed the merit required in ninety-one *kalpas* only. During this period, he met six Buddhas, the first was Vipāśyin and the last was Kāśyapa.

In this connection, the last six Buddhas are mentioned in the *Dīghanikāya*, Dīpaṃkara is also mentioned in the biographical *sūtras* of the Buddha, but the names of the ancient Śākyamuni and Ratnaśikhin Buddhas are not mentioned anywhere in the early *sūtras*. However, the *\*Abhiniṣkramaṇasūtra* mentions both Dīpaṃkara and the ancient Śākyamuni amongst many other Buddhas to whom Gautama made offerings. But this *sūtra* mentions fifteen Buddhas before Gautama Buddha. They are Dīpaṃkara, Incomparable in the World, Superior Lotus, Superior Conduct, Superior Virtue, Śākyamuni, Tissa, Pussa(?), Seeing-all-Benefit and then the last six Buddhas. Here we can see that another nine Buddhas are added to the list of the six past Buddhas, though many other Buddhas are mentioned, there is no specific order. The number of Buddhas became more systematized in the *Vibhāṣā*, where the theory of requiring three *mahāsaṃkhyeyakalpas* for one to become a Buddha is found.

With the gradual lengthening of the period to reach Buddhahood, the merit of the

Buddha also increased. In early Buddhism, the merit of the Buddha was considered to be manifested as the thirty-two major marks of the Great Man, which were thought to be the result of the practice of the *pāramitās* in many lives as described in the *Jātaka* and the *Avadāna* literatures. But according to the *Vibhāṣā*, the Sarvāstivādins asserted that it was only during the extra one hundred *kalpas* that the Buddha practised diligently and acquired the thirty-two major marks, for each of which he completed one hundred merits.<sup>140</sup> The greater merit of the Buddha was the merit of the *dharmakāya*, which constituted of the eighteen exclusive *dharmas*, and which was the result of practising the *pāramitās* for three *mahāsaṃkhyeyakalpas*. The merit of the *dharmakāya*, according to the Sarvāstivādins, is greater than the merit of the *rūpakāya*, since the latter is impure.

During these three *mahāsaṃkhyeyakalpas*, according to the *Vibhāṣā*, the bodhisattva practises four *pāramitās* instead of six: generosity (*dāna*), discipline (*śīla*), energy (*vīrya*) and wisdom (*prajñā*).<sup>141</sup> The *Vibhāṣā* explains: “Foreign teachers hold that there are six *pāramitās* by adding patience (*kṣānti*) and meditation (*dhyāna*). But the teachers of Kāśmīra say that the last two are included in the first four. Patience is included in discipline and meditation in intuitive knowledge; they are accomplished upon completion of discipline and wisdom.”<sup>142</sup>

## 6. Universal Virtues Common to all Buddhas and Their Differences

According to the Sarvāstivādins all Buddhas are equal in three respects:<sup>143</sup> (1) All Buddhas are equal in their cultivation. They have completed the practice of the six *pāramitās* in three infinite *asaṃkhyeyakalpas* and attained supreme and perfect enlightenment (*Samyaksambodhi*). (2) All Buddhas are equal in the *dharmakāya* in that they have immeasurable merit (*puṇya*) of the eighteen exclusive *dharmas* which are in turn the ten powers (*bala*), the four kinds of intrepidity (*vaiśāradya*), the great compassion (*mahākaruṇā*), and the three foundations of mindfulness (*smṛti-upasthāna*). (3) All Buddhas are equal in their service to beings in that they

save hundreds and thousands of *nayutas* of sentient beings and assist them to attain *parinirvāṇa* when they appear in the world. Apart from these, the *Vibhāṣā* mentions three more aspects in which Buddhas are equal. (4) All Buddhas are equal in intelligence (lit. faculty) in that they abide in its superior grade. (5) All Buddhas are equal in morality in that they have achieved the highest morality. (6) All Buddhas are equal in attainment in that they have attained supreme enlightenment (*Samyaksambodhi*) through the fourth *dhyāna*. These last three aspects, in fact, can be included in the first of the above three. This is justified since these three are obtained through cultivation. This is why the later works such as the *Kośa* do not take the last three aspects into account when they explain the universal virtues of the Buddhas.<sup>144</sup>

The Sarvāstivādins also stated that Buddhas are different: (1) in duration of life, (2) in caste, (3) in *gotra*, (4) in stature, and (5) in the duration of their Dharma. Depending on the period during which they appear, their lives are either long or short, they are Kṣatriyas or Brahmins, they belong to the Gautamagotra or Kāśyapagotra, and their bodies are great or small. Whether their Dharma lasts a long or short period of time depends on the conditions of the beings to be converted at the moment of their appearance in that particular world. Since the conditions of the beings to be converted are different, so is the duration of their Dharma.

## 7. Taking Refuge in the Buddha

The Sarvāstivādins took refuge in the *dharmakāya* of the Buddha and not in the *rūpakāya* because they considered the latter impure as discussed above. It is stated in the *Vibhāṣā*:

“Some people say that to take refuge in the Buddha is to take refuge in the body of the Tathāgata, which comprises head, neck, stomach, back, hands and feet. It is explained that the body, born of father and mother, is composed of the defiled *dharmas*, and therefore, is not a source of refuge. The refuge is the Buddha’s fully accomplished qualities (*aśaikṣadharmāḥ*) which comprise *bodhi*, and the



*dharmakāya*.”<sup>145</sup>

The *Kośa* further explains that the Buddha’s fully accomplished qualities (*aśaikṣadharmāḥ*) are the knowledge that all the *kleśas* and their related aspects have been destroyed (*kṣaya-jñāna*).<sup>146</sup> But other schools, perhaps precisely the Mahāsāṃghikas, questioned: “If the fully accomplished qualities which comprise *bodhi* constitute the real Buddha, then how do you explain what is said in the *sūtras*? For instance: ‘Elders, what is called the Buddha? There is a son from the Śākya clan who left the household with good faith after shaving his head and beard, clad in robes, he who is all-knowing (*sarvajña*) is called the Buddha.’ Answer: since the Dharma manifestation depends on the physical body, it is not in contradiction with reasoning.”<sup>147</sup>

The emphasis of the Sarvāstivāda is on the attainment of Buddhahood, the *dharmakāya*, while the physical body is considered secondary. The *dharmakāya* of all Buddhas is the same, therefore, according to the Sarvāstivāda, taking refuge in the Buddha is to take refuge in all Buddhas because the term “Buddha” includes all the Tathāgatas since they are of the same kind.<sup>148</sup> Thus another question arises, namely since the *dharmakāya* or the Dharma is so important to the Sarvāstivādins, why do they first take refuge in the Buddha and not the Dharma? The Sarvāstivādins explained that the Buddha was the founder. If the founder did not teach, then the Dharma would not have been manifested. Thus the Buddha is seen as the first refuge, just as a patient first seeks a good doctor before asking him for medicine. The patient then seeks a nurse to prepare the medicine. The Buddha is like the doctor, the Dharma like the medicine, and the Saṃgha is the nurse. Such is the order of the three refuges.<sup>149</sup>

## 8. The Differences between Buddhas, Pratyekabuddhas and Śrāvakas

The Sarvāstivādins distinguished Buddhas from *pratyekabuddhas* and *śrāvakas* in seven ways in accordance with the *Vibhāṣā*: (1) With regard to their aspects, there

are twenty-one propositions concerning the differences between Buddhas, *pratyekabuddhas* and *śrāvakas*, but these can be summarized as follows.<sup>150</sup> The enlightenment of the Buddhas is thorough and faultless in that they have eliminated all habitual forces, doubt, defiled and undefiled ignorance, and they understand thoroughly the mechanism of dependent origination, but *pratyekabuddhas* and *śrāvakas* do not. The Buddhas have completed the achievement of both the physical bodies of a *mahāpuruṣa* and supreme enlightenment, and they have achieved fulfilment of colour, race, eloquence, vows, fruits and analytical inquiry, but *pratyekabuddhas* and *śrāvakas* have not. The Buddhas also possess the eighteen exclusive *dharma*s, a result of the accumulation of merit in three *mahāsaṃkhyeya-kalpas*. They know the threefold suffering, they work for the sake of living beings of the three *dhātus*, and regard relatives as well as enemies with total impartiality, whilst *pratyekabuddhas* and *śrāvakas* do not. The Buddhas are not defiled by the eight worldly *dharma*s, can liberate beings from difficulties in its entirety, and their merit is incomparable because they have the four kinds of knowledge. These consist of knowledge that is unhindered, faultless, unattached and non-retrogressive, while *pratyekabuddhas* and *śrāvakas* again do not.

(2) With regard to the three kinds of retrogression, they consist of (a) that which is acquired, (b) that which has not yet been acquired, and (c) the enjoyment of the merit. Buddhas have only the retrogression of enjoyment because at times Buddhas are known to suspend their enjoyment of the bliss of merit acquired.<sup>151</sup> Buddhas do not have the other two forms of retrogression because they abide in superior faculties and are not retrogressive. *Pratyekabuddhas* have (b) and (c) types of retrogression as they have not attained the superior faculties of the Buddha, and sometimes suspend their enjoyment of the bliss of merit. They do not however possess the first retrogression because they are also not retrogressive. *Śrāvakas* are divided into two groups, (1) those who are delivered independently of circumstances (*asamaya-vimukta*) and (2) those whose liberation is occasional and circumstantial

(*samaya-vimukta*). The first type of *śrāvaka* is equal to *pratyekabuddhas*. The second type of *śrāvaka* has all the three kinds of retrogression as indeed they are retrogressive and have not attained the non-retrogressive faculties of the three vehicles (*triyāna*) and sometimes they suspend the enjoyment of the bliss of their merit.

(3) With regard to the knowledge that the cankers have been destroyed (*āśravakṣayajñāna*), Buddhas have four kinds of special merit, namely, absence of hindrance, knowledge, power, and guiding by example, while *pratyekabuddhas* and *śaikṣa śrāvakas* have three, excluding the merit of power.<sup>152</sup> Regarding the knowledge of one's own past lives and the knowledge of other people's past lives, Buddhas have three kinds of special merit: knowledge, power, and the absence of hindrance. *Pratyekabuddhas* and *dhyāna śrāvakas* have two merits: knowledge and absence of hindrance, and *śaikṣa śrāvakas* have the single absence of hindrance.

(4) With regard to the *kleśas*, Buddhas have completely eradicated them without any trace or residual effect because the wisdom of Buddhas is sharp and powerful, like the fire at the end of the *kalpa*, blazing all things without remains. In the case of *pratyekabuddhas* and *śrāvakas*, although they have eliminated *kleśas* the residual effect is still there because their wisdom is not as sharp as that of Buddhas, and it is likened to the worldly fire, burning everything but leaving behind ashes.<sup>153</sup>

(5) With regard to the knowledge of the minds of all other beings (*paracittajñāna*), Buddhas are able to know the mind of fifteen *kṣaṇas*, *pratyekabuddhas* are able to know three *kṣaṇas* and *śrāvakas* are able to know two *kṣaṇas* only.<sup>154</sup> It is so because Buddhas are able to exert *paracittajñāna* without any earnest endeavour (*prayoga*) while *pratyekabuddhas* require a weak endeavour, and *śrāvakas* need to make an intermediate or strenuous effort.

(6) With regard to the four unhindered powers of interpretation (*pratisaṃvid*), Buddhas obtain them when they have attained the knowledge of the cankers being destroyed while *pratyekabuddhas* and *śrāvakas* obtain them by earnest endeavour (*prayoga*).<sup>155</sup> Then a question may be asked, if the *pratyekabuddhas* also have this

power, why do they not preach? The Sarvāstivādins argued that *pratyekabuddhas* not only delight in quietude and cherish solitude, but they also abhor noise and dislike crowds. Besides, *pratyekabuddhas* focus their minds on *nirvāṇa* when they proceed to preach the Dharma, but once they do so, they enter into the peaceful and happy state of *mokṣa* in the second *kṣaṇa* that renders them unable to preach. Buddhas are different because though they delight in happy *mokṣa*, yet on account of their great compassion (*mahākaruṇā*) and great equanimity (*mahā-upekṣā*), they preach the Dharma.

(7) With regard to the heat (*uṣma*), summit (*mūrdhan*) and patience (*kṣānti*), the heat of Buddhas does not change while the heat of both *śrāvakas* and *pratyekabuddhas* can change.<sup>156</sup> This equally applies to the summit. The patience of *śrāvakas* can change into that of *pratyekabuddhas* but the patience of both *śrāvakas* and *pratyekabuddhas* cannot change into that of Buddhas because patience is not compatible with bad realms. The patience of *pratyekabuddhas* also cannot change into that of *śrāvakas* because patience does not retrogress.

In conclusion, the Sarvāstivādins were rational and developed their concept of the Buddha more on the basis of reason than on faith, because their attitude towards the teachings of the Buddha is that not every word of the Tathāgata is the preaching of the Dharma.<sup>157</sup> Therefore, they were careful in dealing with the *sūtras* and formulated their concept of the Buddha on the basis of the human identity as revealed in early Buddhism by summarising and synthesising the teachings concerning the Buddha. They considered the Buddha as a human being and thus *bodhi* made Gautama a Buddha. The Sarvāstivādins explicitly portrayed two aspects of the Buddha: the physical being endowed with attributes and the spiritual attainments. Based on these two aspects they formulated the two-body theory for the first time to explain their concept of the Buddha. The nature of the *rūpakāya* is impure though physically perfect while the *dharmakāya* is the embodiment of the Buddha's mental attainments.

With regard to the concept of the *rūpakāya*, they formulated the four categories of the Buddha attributes by adding to the thirty-two major marks, the eighty minor marks, the golden complexion, and the one-fathom halo. With regard to the *dharmakāya*, the Sarvāstivāda School was perhaps the first to explain it through the eighteen special qualities of the Buddha.

<sup>1</sup> The term “early Indian Buddhist Schools” refers to the eighteen or twenty schools mentioned in Vasumitra’s treatise \**Samayabhedavyūhacakra*.

<sup>2</sup> “Early *sūtras*” refers to the *sūtras* in the *Nikāyas* and the *Āgamas*, which are common to both the Theravāda and the Mahāyāna and which are considered by scholars to be the earliest Buddhist literature.

<sup>3</sup> Yinshun, (1994), 167. This scholar believes that the author of the MPPŚ is Nāgārjuna. He puts forward eight points in support of his assertion: (1) As the text was translated by a committee, even if additions were made, they were not necessarily the work of Kumārajīva. Further, the phrases in the text such as “in Chinese we say...” were provided by the translators for the convenience of the Chinese audience, and were not “fabrications” on the part of Kumārajīva. (2) The tradition that claims the existence of a version of the text in one thousand fascicles is unfounded. Evidence suggests that the original text contained one hundred and thirty-six fascicles. (3) Kumārajīva may have learned the Mahāyāna tradition of Kashmir and the work of the scribe Shengyu on the project contains errors. (4) The MPPŚ selects from a number of divergent views, affirming the interpretations of various schools, and is not necessarily biased in favour of the Sarvāstivāda. (5) The Sarvāstivādins did not have a *Kṣudrakapīṭaka* and made little use of stanzas and legends. But the MPPŚ makes extensive use of these materials as a legitimate vehicle for Buddhist doctrine. The *jātaka* and *avadāna* materials are taken from throughout India, and are not limited to Northern India. In fact, the author is intimately connected with Southern India. (6) Nāgārjuna lived to an old age and may have quoted from works of his disciple Aryadeva. Further, Nāgārjuna’s early and later works may differ stylistically. Hence, stylistic differences alone are insufficient evidence to support the claim that the MPPŚ and the \**Madhyamakaśāstra* are the works of different authors. (7) The fact that the MPPŚ is not mentioned in late Indian and Tibetan *Madhyamaka* works may have resulted from the temporary discontinuity of Nāgārjuna’s learning in the history of Buddhism. (8) The MPPŚ and the \**Daśabhūmikavibhāṣā* are consistent, they are not the works of two different authors. This abstract is cited from his article ‘The author and translation of the MPPŚ’ in *Dongfang Zongjiao Yanjiu* (東方宗教研究 Journal of the Oriental Religions), ii, 9-70.

<sup>4</sup> According to Yinshun himself, the *Vibhāṣā* was composed after King Kaniṣka and before the composition of the MPPŚ, in the second century CE because in the treatise itself, it is said that “in the past, the King Kaniṣka...” Yinshun, (1968), 209-214. For a brief survey of the *Vibhāṣā* compendia, see Charles Willemen, Bart Dessein and Collett Cox (1998), 229-239.

<sup>5</sup> T55, 73c. Yinshun is of the opinion that the real author of the *Mahāvibhāṣāśāstra* is neither Kātyāyanipūtra nor the five hundred great arhats, but was first compiled by Pilouni (Vilani?), then was revised and enlarged by Sitapāni and again was revised

and supplemented by Daxi (Dasa?). Thus, it became three versions: the small, the medium and the large. The compilers collected their material from various sources and consulted and also commented on the opinions of the different *abhidharmika* teachers. Therefore, it is not wrong to say that the authors of the treatise are the five hundred great arhats.

<sup>6</sup> Yinshun, (1968), 228.

<sup>7</sup> T27, 871c-872a, 229a and 391c-392a. This quotation of the Mahāsāṃghikas is found in the \**Samyuktāgama*, T2, 28b and the *Aṅguttaranikāya*, ii, 37.

<sup>8</sup> T28, 463b.

<sup>9</sup> T28, 176b.

<sup>10</sup> T27, 229a; 392a; 871c.

<sup>11</sup> Yinshun, (1968), 212.

<sup>12</sup> T25, 92a, 104b, 273a, 341c, 343a, 579c and 756c.

<sup>13</sup> T25, 86c, 91c, 92a, 154c, 155a, 255b, and 273a.

<sup>14</sup> Lamotte has traced many quotations of the *Vibhāṣā* in the MPPŚ. See the Chinese translation of his article, Lamotte, E. (1990), 125.

<sup>15</sup> T25, 92a, line 26-28. The translation is mine.

<sup>16</sup> T25, 273a, line 15-16. The translation is mine.

<sup>17</sup> T25, 341b-c. The translation is mine.

<sup>18</sup> Lamotte, (1990), this is cited from a Chinese translation, 125-126.

<sup>19</sup> F. E. Reynolds, (1977).

<sup>20</sup> N. Dutt, (1930), 138-140.

<sup>21</sup> This stock passage is found in many places in the three versions of the *Vibhāṣā*, T27, 159c, 361b, 428c, 590b, 698a, 730a, and 891c; the \**Abhidharmavibhāṣāsāstra*, T28, 267b-c, 271c, 322a, 590b; and the \**Vibhāṣāsāstra*, 440b, 496b, 517c. The translation is mine.

<sup>22</sup> T27, 392b. The translation is mine.

<sup>23</sup> This quotation is found in the \**Samyuktāgama* (T2, 83c-84a), but the expression is slightly different. The Chinese is as follows: “爾時，世尊告諸比丘：愚癡無聞凡夫，無明覆，愛緣繫，得此識身。內有此識身，外有名色，此二因緣生觸。此六觸入所觸，愚癡無聞凡夫苦、樂受覺，因起種種。云何為六？眼觸入處，耳、鼻、舌、身、意觸入處。若黠慧者，無明覆，愛緣繫，得此識身。如是內有識身，外有名色，此二緣生六觸入處。六觸所觸故，智者生苦、樂受覺，因起種種。何等為六？眼觸入處，耳、鼻、舌、身、意觸入處。愚夫、黠慧，彼於我所修諸梵者，有何差別？”

A similar phrase is found in the Pali *Samyuttanikāya*: “The wise man (compare) with the fool. For the fool (wise man), brethren, cloaked by ignorance and tied to craving, this body is wrought (worked) on this fool (wise): there is just this body and names-and-shapes without (outside): thus this pair. Because of the pair (there is) contact, just six spheres of sense. Touched by these, or one of them, the fool (wise) experiences pleasure and pain.” S ii, 23-25. The translation is adapted from *The Book of Kindred Sayings*, II, 19.

<sup>24</sup> T27, 392a, 871c. The translation is mine.

<sup>25</sup> T27, 863b. “第四，正知入母胎，住出亦爾”，“第四入母胎為菩薩”。

<sup>26</sup> T27, 863c-964a. The translation is mine.

<sup>27</sup> T27, 872a.

<sup>28</sup> T27, 872a.

<sup>29</sup> T27, 899c.

<sup>30</sup> The *Milindapañha*, vol.I, 75, the \**Nāgasena Bhikṣu Sūtra*, T32, 700c, 716a.

<sup>31</sup> At the end of page 89 of the *Milindapañha*, the text states: "Concluded are the questions and answers to Milinda's questions." The same is also mentioned in the Chinese translations of the \**Nāgasena Bhikṣu Sūtra*. So it is clear that the part from page 1 to 89 of the *Milindapañha* is the original. The Theravādins added the latter part according to scholars such as Kogen Mitsuno.

<sup>32</sup> The date of the composition of the *Milindapañha* itself is a problematic issue. See I.B. Horner's introduction to her translation *Milinda's Questions*. For a detailed argument brought forward by scholars, see Guang Xing (1994).

<sup>33</sup> The Chinese *Avadānas* in which only the thirty-two major and eighty minor marks are mentioned are as follows.

Table III. The thirty-two major and eighty minor marks.

中本起經 T4, 159c, 301b, 334a	三十二相八十種好
大方便佛報恩經 T3, 152b	三十二相八十種隨形之好
過去現在因果經 T3, 645b	三十二相八十種好
大莊嚴論經 T4, 335a, 301b	三十二相八十種好
佛本行集經 T3, 871a, 697b,	三十二相八十種好
697a, 695c, 695a, 693c	以三十二大人之相。莊嚴其身。具足八十種好

<sup>34</sup> The \**Madhyametyuktasūtra* (T4, No.196) was translated by Dharmaphala together with Kang Meng-xiang in 207. The *Dafangbianfobaoenjing* (T3, No.156) was translated under the Eastern Han dynasty 25-220 CE, but the name of the translator is lost. The \**Atītapratyutpannahetuphalasūtra* (T3, No.189) was translated by Guṇabhadra about 420-479.

<sup>35</sup> The Chinese *Avadānas* in which the first two and the fourth categories of the Buddha attributes are mentioned are as follows.

Table IV. Thirty-two major and eighty minor marks and the light

撰集百緣經 T4, 237a, 256c, 256a	三十二相八十種好	光明暉曜如百千日
法句譬喻經 T04, 587c	三十二相八十種好	光明洞達照耀天地
悲華經 T3, 182b, 198b, 203a, 188a,	三十二相八十種好	常光一尋 174c
186b, 222a	百福德成就一相 174c	
大乘本生心地觀經 T3, 329c	三十二相八十種好	大光明照十方界
眾許摩訶帝經 T3, 971a, 969a	三十二相八十種好	光明莊嚴

The date of translation of these *sūtras* are as follows: the \**Pūrṇamukhāvadānaśataka*, 223-253; the \**Dharmapadāvadānasūtra*, 290-306; the \**Karuṇāpuṇḍarīkasūtra*, 397-439; the \**Mūlajātaḥḍayabhūmidhyānasūtra*, 785-810; and the \**Samadattamahārājasūtra*, 982-1001.

<sup>36</sup> T3, 532b. Apart from the \**Samantaprabhāsasūtra*, translated by Dharmarakṣa in 308, there is another version of the *Lalitavistara* in Chinese translation, the \**Vaipulyamahāvvyūhasūtra*, translated by Divākara in 683.

<sup>37</sup> The Chinese *Avadānas* in which all the four categories of the Buddha attributes are mentioned are as follows.

Table V. Four categories of the attributes of the Buddha

出曜經 T4, 675c, 659b,	三十二相八十種好	紫磨金色	圓光七尺
621a			
菩薩本行經 T3, 109a	三十二相八十種好	身紫金色	

111b	三十有二八十種好		光明晃煜
大乘悲分陀利經 T3, 239c, 248b, 234c, 268a, 248a,	三十二大人之相八十種好		
242a	三十二相八十種好百福莊嚴皆悉具足	若瞿盧樹紫磨金色	身有圓光
賢愚經 T4, 371b, 443b	三十二相八十種好	身紫金色	光曜人目
433a	三十二相八十妙好		光照天地
431a	三十二相八十種好		
418c	三十二相八十種好	身黃金色	
佛說興起行經 T4, 173a	三十二相八十種好	身色如金山	面如月滿光如日明
方廣大莊嚴經 T3, 616c	三十二相八十種好		
612c	三十二相八十種好	巨身丈六紫磨金色	
601c	三十二相八十種好		身光赫然如日初出
584a	三十二相八十種好		圓光一尋
修行本起經 T3, 464b	三十二相八十種好	身如金剛殊妙難量	
461a	三十二相八十種好		光明普照三千世界
佛說鹿母經 T3, 457c	三十二相八十種好	軀體金色	威光無量
師子月佛本生經 T3, 444a	三十二相八十種好	身紫金色方身丈六	皆放光明如紫金山
菩薩本生鬘論 T3, 343a	三十二相八十種好	佛身相作黃金色	無量光明
342c	三十二相八十種好	作黃金色	無量光明
生經 T3, 100c	三十二相八十種好		威神光光不可稱限
87b	三十二相八十種好	體長丈六	光明超日

<sup>38</sup> *Apadāna*, I, 156.

<sup>39</sup> T32, 704a.

<sup>40</sup> N. Dutt (1978b), 135.

<sup>41</sup> *Questions of King Milinda*, Part I, Introduction, p.XI. Winternitz (1988), II. p. 142, n.i, Pelliot, Demièville and J.Rahder are also of the same opinion.

<sup>42</sup> For instance, Alasanda in Pāli, A-li-san in Chinese which is identified as Alexandra Island, is an island town in West India. *Yavana* in Pāli, *Daqing* in Chinese is a Bactrian country in West India. Again Kashmir, *Ji-bin* in Chinese is in Northwest India; *Sāgala*, or *Se-jian* in Chinese is identified as Sialkot in West India. Most of the rivers in the Chinese version: *Heng*, *Xin-ta*, *Si-ta*, *Pa-cha* and *Shipi-i-r* which are identified by Dr. Kogen Mizuno (*On the Recensions of Milindapañha*, Summary of the Research Studies of University of Komazawa, 17, 1959) as *Gaṅgā*, *Sindhu*, *Śītā*, *Vakṣu* and *Sarasvatī*, are in Northwest India except for the *Gaṅgā*. All these names of places suggest Northwest India as the place of compilation for the original.

<sup>43</sup> T27, 888a-889a.

<sup>44</sup> T27, 887c-888a.



<sup>45</sup> T27, 889c-890b.

<sup>46</sup> T. Endo, (1997), 156-163.

<sup>47</sup> *The Buddhavaṃsa-aṭṭhakathā*, 32. The translation is adopted from T. Endo (1997), 159.

<sup>48</sup> T27, 890b. The translation is mine.

<sup>49</sup> T27, 886c.

<sup>50</sup> T27, 889b.

<sup>51</sup> The list of the thirty-two marks is taken from the *Mahāpadānasutta* (D ii, 16-18) while the eighty minor marks are taken from the \**Mahāprajñāpāramitāsūtra*, T6, 968a-969a. Therefore, in the description of the thirty-two marks, Pāli terminology is used while in the description of the eighty minor marks, Sanskrit terminology is used since these two *sūtras* are in Pāli and Sanskrit respectively. The reason for the choice of these *sūtras* is to show how many items have been added in the eighty marks when compared with the earliest list of the thirty-two marks.

<sup>52</sup> T27, 889a.

<sup>53</sup> The *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*, T1, 12b, the \**Aśokasūtra*, T2, 166c. The *Buddhavaṃsa* refers to the term *anubyañjana* (xxi.v.27) while the *Apadāna* talks of eighty minor marks (i, 156). However, Endo is of the opinion that the Theravāda Pāli tradition borrowed the notion from the Sanskrit tradition. See Endo (1997), 47.

<sup>54</sup> The three other translations are: the \**Buddhāparinirvāṇasūtra*, T1 (5), translated by Śrāmaṇa Bai Fazhu (白法祖) during the Western Jin Dynasty of 265-317 CE; the \**Parinirvāṇasūtra*, T1 (6), translator lost, but listed under Eastern Jin Dynasty (317-420 CE) and the \**Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*, T1 (7), translated by Faxian in 399-414 CE.

<sup>55</sup> T2, 599a, 615c, 623b, 664a, 664b, 678b, 686a, 686b, 754b, 758a, 769b, 788b, and 799c.

<sup>56</sup> T2, 615c, 664a, 788b.

<sup>57</sup> Yinshun, (1991), 764-774.

<sup>58</sup> T2, 550a.

<sup>59</sup> T2, 640a.

<sup>60</sup> The *Apadāna*, i, 156. The *Buddhavaṃsa*, XXI v 27, only mentions 'minor marks' (*anubyañjana*), but does not specify the number eighty. The *Milindapañha*, 75, mentions the term 'eighty minor marks' (*asūti-anubyañjana*) together with the thirty-two major marks and a fathom halo.

<sup>61</sup> The \**Abhiniṣkramaṇasūtra*, T3, 696a-697a and the \**Vaipulyamahāvvyūhasūtra*, T3, 557b-c.

<sup>62</sup> T3, 532b.

<sup>63</sup> H. Nakamura (1996), 132.

<sup>64</sup> T3, 932a. 摩訶僧祇師, 名爲大事; 薩婆多師, 名此經爲大莊嚴; 迦葉維師, 名爲佛生因緣; 曇無德師, 名爲釋迦牟尼佛本行; 尼沙塞師, 名爲毘尼藏根本。

<sup>65</sup> T3, 655a.

<sup>66</sup> T3, 682a.

<sup>67</sup> The *Milindapañhaṭṭhikā*, 17-18, the *Jinālaṅkāraṭṭhikā*, 198. Cited from T. Endo, (1997), 144.

<sup>68</sup> T. Endo, (1997), 144-5.

<sup>69</sup> T25, 255c. The MPPŚ mentions "such as the eighty minor marks you believe are not found in the *Tripitaka*" when the author discusses the eighteen exclusive *dharmas* with the Sarvāstivādins.

<sup>70</sup> T25, 255c. The MPPŚ states that “You do not believe in the Mahāyāna, so you cannot quote from it (the Mahāyāna *sūtras*) as evidence. You should quote from the *śrāvaka* teaching as support” when the author discusses the eighteen exclusive *dharma*s with the Sarvāstivādins.

<sup>71</sup> The *Buddhavaṃsa*, i, v, 45, the *Vimānavatthu*, 213.

<sup>72</sup> The *Encyclopedia of Buddhism*, vol. ii, fascicule, 3, 380.

<sup>73</sup> The Chinese phrase is “左光”. Here the Chinese word “左” which literally means left standing for superior or better.

<sup>74</sup> T27, 506a.

<sup>75</sup> The *\*Atītapratyutpannahetuphalasūtra*, translated by Guṇabhadra in 420-468 CE, T3, 627b. The *\*Samadattamahārājasūtra*, T3, 940b20, tr. Faxian (法賢) in 982-1001.

<sup>76</sup> T24, 109a; T6, 967c; T8, 395c and T25, 90c.

<sup>77</sup> T27, 506a-b. The author of the MPPŚ (T25, 311c) also explains that Śākyamuni possesses a one-fathom halo while Maitreya has the bodily halo of ten *li*, equal to five thousand meters.

<sup>78</sup> The *Buddhavaṃsa*, i, v, 15; vii, v, 24; xiii, v, 2 etc. The commentaries: *Dīghanikāya* commentary, iii 918, 972; *Majjhimanikāya* commentary, ii 167; *Samyuttanikāya* commentary, iii 48; *Ānguttaranikāya* commentary, i 10; *Buddhavaṃsa* commentary, 41, 87. It explains that these rays are usually said to consist of six colours: blue, yellow, red, white, crimson and combination of the five colours. The *Sāratthappakāsinī* mentions that the length of rays is eighty hands.

<sup>79</sup> *Samyuttanikāya* commentary, iii, 47.

<sup>80</sup> T8, 1b; 147b-c; 217b.

<sup>81</sup> T27, 207b.

<sup>82</sup> T27, 620c-621a. The *sūtra* states that the Buddha helped sentient beings to attain perfection when he saw they had any defect. He also restored the dilapidated monasteries and stupas and renovated statues of Buddhas and bodhisattvas. Due to such good *karma*, the Buddha had a glorious body without any defect.

<sup>83</sup> T27, 154b-156b.

<sup>84</sup> T2, 857c-859a. It was translated by Dharmarakṣa in Western Jin dynasty CE 265-316.

<sup>85</sup> According to the *Vibhāṣā*, (T27, 657b) there are two theories regarding the Buddha’s deliberately giving up his life: a one-third theory and a one-fifth theory. According to the one-third theory, the Buddha had the life span of one hundred and twenty years, but he gave up forty years of his life. While according to the one-fifth theory, the Buddha had the life span of one hundred years, but he gave up twenty years of his life.

<sup>86</sup> T27, 601c-602b. The *Vibhāṣā* mentions two other similar explanations. First, harming the body of the Buddha is only harming the master while the split of the Saṃgha is the destruction of what the master respects, the Dharma. Second, harming the Buddha is counted only as the sin of *proyoga* while to split the Saṃgha one needs to plan for a long time, one to four months. The Buddha is not distressed mentally when one harms him physically, but to split the Saṃgha would result in the suffering of many beings.

<sup>87</sup> The full description of the eighteen exclusive *dharma*s of the Hīnayāna are found in the *Vibhāṣā* (T27, 156c-160c), the *\*Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* (T29, 140a-141b), the *\*Nyāyānusaraśāstra* (T29, 746a-750a) and the *\*Abhidharma(piṭaka)prakaraṇaśāsanāśāstra* (T29, 955c-958a). But the description given in the *Vibhāṣā* is much

more comprehensive and great compassion is explained again in 428a-430c, the three foundations of mindfulness are also explained again in 942b-943a.

<sup>88</sup> T28, 459a-b. 《鞞婆沙論》(卷 6). 彼佛契經說八萬法身，問曰：法身者有何齊限數？有一說者，一數經名法身，謂彼一身，是謂一身齊限數，如是至一切八萬。更有說者，謂契經說，意止此是一法身齊限數。如是契經說，意斷、神足、根、力、覺種、道種，是謂一法身齊限數，如是至一切八萬。算者說，八字一句，三十二字爲一首盧數，有五百千，亦復五千，五百五千，一法身數。如是至八萬。 The translation is mine.

<sup>89</sup> T28, 459b. 《鞞婆沙論》.

<sup>90</sup> T28, 472c. 《鞞婆沙論》：“或曰。此中說三分法身戒身定身慧身。彼不害一切眾生者是戒身。我不爲他他不爲我者是定身。諸所習法皆是盡法者是慧身。如三身三戒三思惟亦爾。”

<sup>91</sup> The list of the ten powers is found in M i, 69-72; A v, 33-36; the \**Dīrghāgama*, T2, 41b-c; the \**Samyuktāgama*, T2, 186c-187a; the \**Ekottarāgama*, T2, 776b-c; 859a. The list of the four kinds of intrepidity is found in M i, 71-72. But both the powers and the intrepidity are mentioned in numerous places in the *Nikāyas* and the *Āgamas*.

<sup>92</sup> The *Salāyatanaṅgavibhaṅgasutta*, M iii, 221-222. There is a *sūtra* in Chinese translation having the same title and contents as the Pāli one, T1, 693c-694a.

<sup>93</sup> The eighteen exclusive *dharmas* of the Mahāyāna are (1) the Tathāgata has no bodily defects. (2) He has no speech defects. (3) He has no faintness of memory. (4) He has no notion of diversity. (5) He has no thoughts which are not composed. (6) His equanimity is not affected by any non-knowledge. (7) He has no loss of zest. (8) He has no loss of energy. (9) He has no loss of memory. (10) He has no loss of wisdom. (11) He has no loss of deliverance. (12) He has no loss of knowledge and vision of deliverance. (13) All bodily actions of the Tathāgata are preceded and accompanied by knowledge. (14) All vocal actions of the Tathāgata are preceded and accompanied by knowledge. (15) All mental actions of the Tathāgata are preceded and accompanied by knowledge. (16) With regard to the past he has knowledge and vision that are free of attachment or obstacles. (17) With regard to the future he has knowledge and vision that are free of attachment or obstacles. (18) With regard to the present he has knowledge and vision that are free of attachment or obstacles. This is found in the *Prajñāpāramitāsūtras*, T6, 967a-b; T8, 255c-256a; T8, 395b; the MPPŚ, T25, 247b.

<sup>94</sup> T1, 885a-b. This independent \**Brahmāyūḥsūtra* was translated by Zi Qian in the Wu dynasty, 222-280 CE. But the \**Madhyamāgama*, in which the counterpart of the \**Brahmāyūḥsūtra* is found, was translated by Gautama Saṅghadeva in 397-398 CE. A comparison of the independent \**Brahmāyūḥsūtra* and its counterpart shows that there are many interpolations in Zi Qian's translation regarding the attributes of the Buddha such as the term “eighteen exclusive *dharmas*”, the term “eighty minor marks”, and the five colour light from the mouth of the Buddha. However, there is no mention of these terms in Saṅghadeva's translation at all. This suggests that the transmitters of the \**Madhyamāgama* were very faithful to their tradition. Though the \**Madhyamāgama* was translated more than a hundred years later than the independent \**Brahmāyūḥsūtra*, it still keeps its pure tradition. This makes the study of Buddhist literature, especially the Chinese translations, more difficult.

<sup>95</sup> The term “eighteen exclusive *dharmas*” is mentioned twice in the *Dafangbianfobaoenjing* (T3, 136c, 161a), once in the \**Mahāyānamahākaraṇa-*

*pundarikāsūtra* (T3, 288b) and once in the \**Vaipulyamahāvvyūhasūtra* (T3, 611b).

<sup>96</sup> T. Endo, (1997), 130-131.

<sup>97</sup> The date of the composition of the *Milindapañha* itself is a problematic issue. The two Chinese translations entitled \**Nāgasena Bhikṣu Sūtra* (T32, nos.1670a and b) correspond only to the pages 1-89 of the PTS edition of the *Milindapañha* edited by Trenckner. The second portion from pages 90 to the end of the text was composed in Sri Lanka. The term *aṭṭhādasabuddhadhamma* is mentioned twice on pages 105 and 285. See T. Endo, (1997), 115. For detailed arguments, see Guang Xing (1994).

<sup>98</sup> T. Endo, (1997), 115.

<sup>99</sup> Cited from T. Endo (1997), 119. *Dīghanikāya* commentary, iii, 994.

<sup>100</sup> Yinshun, (1968), 212.

<sup>101</sup> T8, 395b, T6, 967a-b.

<sup>102</sup> T25, 255c.

<sup>103</sup> H. Dayal, (1932), 23.

<sup>104</sup> T27, 156c-157c.

<sup>105</sup> The ten powers are as follows: 1. The Tathāgata truly knows the possible as the possible and the impossible as the impossible. 2. The Tathāgata truly knows the function of karma in the past, present and future with regard to place, cause, object, and maturation. 3. The Tathāgata truly knows the impurity, purification, categories, and purity of meditations, liberations, concentrations and attainments. 4. The Tathāgata truly knows the world endowed with diversifications and multiple dispositions. 5. The Tathāgata truly knows the different aspirations of other living beings and individuals. 6. The Tathāgata truly knows the degree of the moral faculties of other living beings and individuals. 7. The Tathāgata truly knows the path that leads to different destinies. 8. The Tathāgata recollects his previous existences over a period of many worlds that evolve and dissolve. 9. The Tathāgata sees with his divine and pure eye the appearance and passing away of living beings. 10. The Tathāgata truly knows that the cankers have been destroyed in him.

<sup>106</sup> The twenty aspects of the ten powers are as follows: (1) With regard to the *dhātus*, the eighth and ninth powers are in the *rūpadhātu*, those which are defiled (*kleśa*) in the rest powers are in the three *dhātus* and those which are pure are not in any *dhātu*.

(2) With regard to the *bhūmis*, the eighth and ninth powers are in the four fundamental *dhyānas* because they are of the same essence. Those powers which are defiled are in the eleven *bhūmis*, the four *dhyānas* in the *kāmadhātu*, the four *arūpyadhātus*, *anāgāmya-dhyāna*, *antara-dhyāna* and those which are pure are in nine *bhūmis*.

(3) With regard to support, it depends on the great male body in Jambudvīpa in the *kāmadhātu* that one becomes a Buddha.

(4) With regard to the sixteen aspects of the four noble truths, the first and the seventh powers account for the sixteen aspects or other aspects. The second power accounts for the eight aspects of the *duḥkha* and the *samudaya* or other aspects. The third, the fourth, the fifth and the sixth powers account for the twelve aspects of the *duḥkha*, the *samudaya* and the *mārga* or other aspects. The eighth and ninth powers account for the other aspects but not the sixteen. The tenth power accounts for the four aspects of the *nirodha* or other aspects if it lays hold of the undefiled objects, it accounts for the sixteen aspects if it depends on the undefiled body.

(5) With regard to the objects, the first power accounts for all *dharmas*, the second power accounts for only the *duḥkha* and the *samudaya*. The third, the fourth,

the fifth and the sixth powers account for three truths except *nirodha*. The seventh power accounts for the four truths. The eighth power accounts for the five aggregates in the *kāmadhātu* and *rūpadhātu*. The ninth power accounts for the *rūpa-āyatana*. The tenth power accounts for the *nirodha* if it lays hold of the undefiled objects, it accounts for all dharmas if it depends on the undefiled body.

(6) With regard to the fourfold contemplation, the fifth and the eighth powers account for only the dharma contemplation. The ninth power accounts for only the contemplation of body. The tenth power accounts for the dharma contemplation if it lays hold of the undefiled objects but it accounts for the fourfold contemplation if it depends on the undefiled body. Other powers all account for the fourfold contemplation.

(7) With regard to the ten wisdoms, the first and the seventh powers are of all the ten wisdoms. The third, the fourth, the fifth and the sixth powers are of nine wisdoms except the *nirodhajñāna*. The eighth and the ninth are of only *saṃvṛtijñāna*. The tenth power is of the six wisdoms which are dharma, *anavaya*, *nirodha*, *kṣaya*, *anutpāda* and *saṃvṛti* if it lays hold of the undefiled objects but it is of the ten wisdoms if it depends on the undefiled body.

(8) With regard to the three *samādhis* of emptiness, no-marks and non-contrivance, the first and the seventh powers are of the three *samādhis* together or not. The second power accounts for the *duḥkha*, *samudaya*, *sūnyatā*, and non-contrivance together or not. The third, the fourth, the fifth and the sixth powers are of *duḥkha*, *samudaya*, *mārga*, *sūnyatā*, and non-contrivance together or not. The eighth and the ninth powers are not under the three *samādhis*. The tenth power is of the *samādhi* of no-marks together or not if it lays hold of the undefiled objects but it is of the three *samādhis* together or not if it depends on the undefiled body.

(9) With regard to the faculty (*indriya-samutta*), all the ten powers have the three faculties: happiness, joy and equanimity.

(10) With regard to the past, future and present, all the ten powers are of the three times. Others explain that the first and the seventh powers account for the past, the present, the future and also apart from it. The second, the third, the fourth, the fifth and the sixth powers account for all the three. The eighth power of the past and the present accounts for the past, and of the future accounts for the three. The ninth power of the past accounts for the past, of the present accounts for the present and of the future accounts for the future, it also accounts for the three if the dharma does not arise. The tenth power accounts for other than the three if it lays hold of the undefiled objects but it accounts for the three and also apart from the three if it depends on the undefiled body.

(11) With regard to good (*kuśala*), bad (*akuśala*) and neutral (*avyākṛta*), all the ten powers are good.

(12) With regard to good (*kuśala*), bad (*akuśala*) and neutral (*avyākṛta*) as objects, the tenth power reasons the good if it lays hold of the undefiled objects but it reasons the three if it depends on the undefiled body. The other nine powers reason the three.

(13) With regard to *dhātus* as object, the eighth and the ninth powers account for the *kāmadhātu* and the *rūpadhātu*, the second power accounts for the three *dhātus*. The tenth power accounts for none if it lays hold of the undefiled objects but it accounts for the three *dhātus* or none if it depends on the undefiled body. All the other powers account for the three *dhātus* or none.

(14) With regard to *śaikṣa*, *aśaikṣa* and neither *śaikṣa* nor *aśaikṣa*, the eighth and

the ninth powers are of neither *śaikṣa* nor *aśaikṣa*, all other eight powers, those of which are without *kleśa* are *aśaikṣa* and those of which are with *kleśa* are neither *śaikṣa* nor *aśaikṣa*.

(15) With regard to *śaikṣa*, *aśaikṣa* and neither *śaikṣa* nor *aśaikṣa* as object, the second, the eighth and the ninth powers account for only neither *śaikṣa* nor *aśaikṣa*. The tenth power accounts for only neither *śaikṣa* nor *aśaikṣa* if it lays hold of the undefiled objects but it accounts for the three if it depends on the undefiled body. All the other powers account for the three.

(16) With regard to the *kleśa* of those removed in the path of seeing (*darśana-heya*) and of those removed in the path of cultivation (*bhāvanā-heya*) and of those not removed (*aheya*), the eighth and the ninth powers are of the *darśana-heya* only, all the other eight powers of those which are not pure are of *bhāvanā-heya*, of those which are pure are of *aheya*.

(17) With regard to the *kleśa* of those removed in the path of seeing (*darśana-heya*) and of those removed in the path of cultivation (*bhāvanā-heya*) and of those not removed (*aheya*) as object, the second and the eighth powers account for the *darśanaheya*. The ninth power accounts for the *bhāvanaheya*. The tenth power accounts for only *aheya* if it lays hold of the undefiled objects but it accounts for the three if it depends on the undefiled body. All the other powers account for the three.

(18) With regard to name (*nama*) and meaning (*artha*) as object, the fifth, the sixth and the ninth powers account for only the meaning. The tenth power accounts for only the meaning if it lays hold of the undefiled objects but it accounts for both if it depends on the undefiled body. All the other powers account for both.

(19) With regard to self-continuity, continuity by others and non-continuity as objects, the first and the seventh account for the three. The tenth power accounts for non-continuity if it lays hold of the undefiled objects but it accounts for the three if it depends on the undefiled body. All the other powers account for self-continuity and continuity by others.

(20) With regard to the ways of obtaining the ten powers, by *prayoga* or when *kleśa* is eliminated, all the ten powers are obtained either by *prayoga* because they have been attained through endeavour of three *asaṃkhyeyakalpas* or when *kleśa* is eliminated.

<sup>107</sup> The four kinds of intrepidity are that the Buddha has: (1) the intrepidity in asserting that he has attained perfect enlightenment; (2) the intrepidity in asserting that he has destroyed all defilements; (3) the intrepidity in explaining to people those elements which hinder the realization of the Dharma and (4) the intrepidity in expounding the method of liberation.

<sup>108</sup> The twenty-one aspects of the four kinds of intrepidity are as follows: (1) with regard to *dhātu*, the four kinds of intrepidity of those which are not pure (*kleśa*) are of the three *dhātus* and those which are pure are not in the three *dhātus*. (2) With regard to *bhūmi*, the four kinds of intrepidity of those which are not pure (*kleśa*) are of the eleven *dhyānas* and those which are pure are in the nine *dhyānas*. (3) With regard to support, it depends on the great male body in Jambudvīpa in the *kāmadhātu* that one becomes a Buddha. (4) With regard to the sixteen aspects of the four noble truths, the first is of the sixteen aspects or other aspects. In the second, that which accounts for the pure objects is of the four aspects of the *nirodha* or other aspects and that which lays hold of the body without *kleśa* is of the sixteen aspects or other aspects. The third is of the eight aspects of the *duḥkha* and *samudaya* or other aspects. The fourth is of the sixteen aspects or other aspects. (5) With regard to the objects, the first accounts

for all dharmas. In the second, that which accounts for the pure objects accounts for *nirodha* and that which lays hold of the body without *kleśa* accounts for all the dharmas. The third accounts for the *duḥkha* and *samudaya*. The fourth accounts for the four truths. (6) With regard to the fourfold contemplation, concerning the second, that which accounts for the pure objects is of the contemplation of dharma and that which lays hold of the body without *kleśa* is of all fourfold contemplation. All other three are of the fourfold contemplation. (7) With regard to the ten wisdoms, the first and the fourth are of the ten wisdoms. Concerning the second, that which accounts for the pure objects is of six wisdoms which are dharma, *anavaya*, *nirodha*, *kṣaya*, *anutpada* and *saṃvṛti* and that which lays hold of the body without *kleśa* is of the ten wisdoms. The third is of eight wisdoms except *nirodha* and *mārga*. (8) With regard to the three *samādhis* of emptiness, no-marks and non-contrivance, the first and the fourth are of the three *samādhis* whether grouped together or not. Concerning the second, that which accounts for pure objects is of the *samādhi* of no-marks together or not and that which lays hold of the body without *kleśa* is of the three *samādhis* together or not. The third accounts for the *duḥkha*, *samudaya*, emptiness, non-contrivance together or not. (9) With regard to the faculties (*indriya-samutta*) of happiness, joy and equanimity, all the four are of three faculties. (10) With regard to the past, the future and the present, all the four are of the three times. (11) With regard to the past, the future and the present as objects, the first and the fourth account for the three times and not time. Concerning the second, that which accounts for the pure objects is of no time and that which lays hold of the body without *kleśa* is of the three times and no time. The third accounts for only the three times. (12) With regard to good (*kuśala*), bad and neutral, all the four kinds of intrepidity are good. (13) With regard to good (*kuśala*), bad and neutral as objects. Concerning the second, that which accounts for the pure objects accounts for the good only and that which lays hold of the body without *kleśa* accounts for the three. The other three account for the three. (14) With regard to *dhātu* as object, the first and the fourth account for the three *dhātus* or not. Concerning the second, that which accounts for the pure objects accounts for none and that which lays hold of the body without *kleśa* accounts for the three *dhātus* or not. The third accounts for the three *dhātus*. (15) With regard to *śaikṣa*, *aśaikṣa* and neither *śaikṣa* nor *aśaikṣa*, the four kinds of intrepidity of those which are not pure (*kleśa*) are of the *aśaikṣa* and those which are pure are of neither *śaikṣa* nor *aśaikṣa*. (16) With regard to *śaikṣa*, *aśaikṣa* and neither *śaikṣa* nor *aśaikṣa* as objects, the first and the fourth account for the three. Concerning the second, that which accounts for the pure objects accounts for neither *śaikṣa* nor *aśaikṣa* and that which lays hold of the body without *kleśa* accounts for the three. The third accounts for neither *śaikṣa* nor *aśaikṣa*. (17) With regard to the *kleśa* of those removed in the path of seeing (*darśana-heya*) and of those removed in the path of cultivation (*bhāvanā-heya*) and of those not removed (*aheya*), the four kinds of intrepidity of those which are not pure (*kleśa*) are of the *bhāvanā-heya* and those which are pure are of the *aheya*. (18) With regard to the *kleśa* of those removed in the path of seeing (*darśana-heya*) and of those removed in the path of cultivation (*bhāvanā-heya*) and of those not removed (*aheya*) as objects, the first and the fourth account for the three. Concerning the second, that which accounts for the pure objects accounts for *aheya* and that which lays hold of the body without *kleśa* accounts for the three. The third accounts for the *darśana-heya*. (19) With regard to name and meaning as objects, the second of that which accounts for the pure objects accounts for meaning only and of

that which lays hold of the body without *kleśa* accounts for both name and meaning. The other three account for both name and meaning. (20) With regard to self-continuity, continuity by others and non-continuity as objects, the first and the fourth account for the three. Concerning the second, that which accounts for the pure objects accounts for non-continuity and that which lays hold of the body without *kleśa* accounts for the three. The third accounts for the self-continuity and continuity by others. (21) With regard to the ways of obtaining the four kinds of intrepidity, by *prayoga* or when *kleśa* is eliminated, all the four are obtained either by *prayoga* because they have been attained through endeavour of three *asaṃkhyeyakalpas* or when *kleśa* is eliminated.

<sup>109</sup> The full explanation given in the *Vibhāṣā* is that strong is power and brave is intrepidity, stable is power and non-timid is intrepidity; benefiting oneself is power and benefiting others is intrepidity, taking care of oneself is power and attracting others is intrepidity, undefeatable is power and conquering others is intrepidity, not to submit is power and to subjugate others is intrepidity, wisdom as one's own character is power and wisdom as the common character is intrepidity, wisdom is power and eloquence is intrepidity, cause is power and effect is intrepidity, grasping (the teaching) by oneself is power and able to preach it to others is intrepidity, understanding the meaning is power and understanding the context is intrepidity, understanding the meaning of the dharma without obstacle is power and understanding the words without obstacle is intrepidity, comprehending well the meaning of the dharma without obstacle is power and comprehending well the words without obstacle is intrepidity, accumulation is power and enjoyment is intrepidity, to acquire wealth for oneself is power and to share the wealth with others is intrepidity, understanding the prescription of medicine is power and curing the disease is intrepidity, and intelligent understanding is power and not afraid of difficulties is intrepidity.

<sup>110</sup> T27, 942b-943a.

<sup>111</sup> The *Kośa*, T29, 0141a; another translation of the *Kośa-bhāṣya*, T29, 292a; the \**Abhidharma(pitaka)prakaraṇaśāsanaśāstra*, T29, 957b; and the \**Abhidharmanyāyānusāraśāstra*, T29, 749b.

<sup>112</sup> Saṅghabhūti's translation of the *Vibhāṣā* (鞞婆娑論), T28, 496b-c; Xuanzang's translation of the *Vibhāṣā*, T27, 159b-160a. The reasons given in Buddhavarma's translation are very much the same as that of Xuanzang's translation.

<sup>113</sup> This explanation seems to be influenced by the Mahāyāna doctrine.

<sup>114</sup> Yinshun, (1968), 650-654.

<sup>115</sup> The English translation of the \**Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* by Leo M. Pruden is made from the French translation of the Chinese translation that was produced by Xuanzang from its original Sanskrit version. Therefore, Pruden's translation is the third so there may be some alterations.

<sup>116</sup> T27, 160b.

<sup>117</sup> T27, 159b-160b.

<sup>118</sup> T27, 428a.

<sup>119</sup> T27, 160c.

<sup>120</sup> T27, 160c-161a.

<sup>121</sup> T27, 701a-b. 有爲法有三分齊，謂時色名，時之極少謂一剎那，色之極少爲一極微，名之極少爲依一字。Here, Name (*nāma*) means concepts or non-physical phenomena as contrasted with the *dharmas* contained in the category of form (*rūpa*). It refers to those existences categorized under feeling, apperception, volition and



consciousness.

<sup>122</sup> T27, 74a.

<sup>123</sup> T27, 201c.

<sup>124</sup> T27, 194a.

<sup>125</sup> There are two kinds of ignorance: the defiled and the undefiled. The defiled ignorance includes all the *kleśas* and it has *avidyā* as its essence. The undefiled ignorance has inferior wisdom as its essence. The Buddha has eliminated both, but the *pratyekabuddhas* and the *śrāvakas* have eliminated only the defiled ignorance.

<sup>126</sup> Yao Zhihua, (1996), 163. Kuiji helped Xuanzang in all his translation works, such as the *Vibhāṣā*. Therefore he was particularly well versed in the teachings of the Sarvāstivāda. So his commentary on Vasumitra's treatise on the doctrine of Buddhist schools is based on the knowledge which he acquired and learned from Xuanzang. So his comments on different schools are always in agreement with the *Vibhāṣā*. According to Kuiji, some schools assert that the Buddha also had dreams but we do not know according to which schools he based this claim upon.

<sup>127</sup> There is frequent mention in the *sūtras* that the Buddha slept when he was tired, but there is no mention of the dreams of the Buddha. For instance, the *Sekhasutta* mentions that the Buddha went to sleep when he got back pains after a day's preaching. M i. 354. Again, the \**Samyuktanikāya* iv mentions that the Buddha slept on a similar occasion. S iv. 183-184.

<sup>128</sup> According to the *Vibhāṣā*, Vasumitra says that there are five causes for dreams. (1) They are caused by others such as gods, ghosts, medicine, relatives' thought etc. (2) They are caused by previous sight or hearing of something or one's learning and practice of something. (3) They are omens for either good or bad to happen. (4) They are caused by thought, doubt, and desire. (5) They are caused by illness. The text also gives seven causes for dreams in the Vedas. They are caused by previous sight, hearing, experience, desire, thought, illness or as an omen. T27, 193c-194a.

<sup>129</sup> T27, 153b.

<sup>130</sup> T27, 72b.

<sup>131</sup> J. Masuda, (1922), 52.

<sup>132</sup> N. Dutt, (1930), 26. Divyā. 226, 271.

<sup>133</sup> T29, 63c. 無上菩提甚難可得，非多願行無容得成。

<sup>134</sup> Leo M. Pruden, (1990), 3, 480. According to the *Vibhāṣā* T27, 892b, the foreign teachers say that there are six *pāramitās*, but the Kashmir teachers say that Patience (*ksānti*) is included in Discipline and Meditation in Wisdom.

<sup>135</sup> T27, 886c. The translation is mine.

<sup>136</sup> T25, 92a. The translation is mine.

<sup>137</sup> T25, 92b. The translation is mine.

<sup>138</sup> The *Kośa*, T29, 63b-c, the \**Abhidharmanyāyānusāraśāstra*, T29, 523c.

<sup>139</sup> T27, 890a-893a. The *Mahāvastu*, i, 1. In the Pāli sources, (*Cariyāpitaka*, i, 1.1 etc.), the career of the Bodhisattva is four *asamkheyyas* in length plus a hundred thousand *kappas*.

<sup>140</sup> T27, 887c-891b.

<sup>141</sup> T27, 892a.

<sup>142</sup> T27, 892b.

<sup>143</sup> There are three places in the *Vibhāṣā* discussing it: T27, 85a-b; 131b and 624a-b, also T28, 104a. However, the full discussion is found in the following three works: the *Kośa-bhāṣya*, T29, 141b-c; the \**Abhidharma(piṭaka)prakaraṇaśāsanāśāstra*, T29,

957c-8a; and the \**Abhidharmanyāyānusāraśāstra*, T29, 749c-750a.

<sup>144</sup> In another place of the *Vibhāṣā* (T27, 479c), it states that Buddhas are similar in five ways: (1) Regarding *dhyāna*, all Buddhas attained *bodhi* through the fourth *dhyāna*. (2) Regarding *prayoga*, all Buddhas completed the practice of six *pāramitās* in three *mahāsaṃkhyeya kalpas*. (3) Regarding the object, all Buddhas attained *bodhi* through observation of the four noble truths. (4) Regarding the aspect, all Buddhas practiced the path according to the sixteen characteristics. (5) Regarding work, all Buddhas eliminated *kleśa* by the power of the way of purity (*anāśravamārga*) and liberated numerous sentient beings to *parinirvāṇa*.

<sup>145</sup> T27, 177a. The translation is mine.

<sup>146</sup> T29, 76b. “何等名爲佛無學法？謂盡智等及彼隨行，非色等身，前後等故。”

<sup>147</sup> T29, 177b. The translation is mine.

<sup>148</sup> T29, 177c.

<sup>149</sup> T29, 178c.

<sup>150</sup> T27, 735b-c.

<sup>151</sup> T27, 315b-c.

<sup>152</sup> T27, 530c.

<sup>153</sup> T27, 77a-c.

<sup>154</sup> T27, 515b-c.

<sup>155</sup> T27, 904a-905a. The four unhindered powers of interpretation are dharma or the letter of the law, *artha* or its meaning, *nirukti* or the form of expression and *pratibhāna* or in eloquence.

<sup>156</sup> T27, 33b.

<sup>157</sup> J. Masuda (1925), 52. At the beginning of Vasumitra's work, there are five verses, the last one reads as follows: “when the teachings of the Buddha are closely examined, the fundamentals are the *āryan* truths. Like (one) who gathers gold from (heaps of) sand, (out of untruths) one should pick up the truths.” (see Masuda (1925), 13) This reflects the attitude of the Sarvāstivāda concerning the teachings of the Buddha.

## Chapter Three

### The Concept of the Buddha in Early Indian Buddhist Schools (II)

#### -- the Mahāsāṃghika and Other Schools

##### 1. The Mahāsāṃghikas

The Mahāsāṃghikas' religious philosophy was based more on faith than reason and accepted whatever was said by the Buddha, or more precisely, whatever was taught in the *Nikāyas* and the *Āgamas*.<sup>1</sup> As a result, they developed the concept of a transcendental (*lokottara*) Buddha based on the superhuman qualities of the Buddha as discussed in the first chapter. Two aspects of the concept of the Buddha of the Mahāsāṃghikas can be identified: the true Buddha who is omniscient and omnipotent, and the manifested forms through which he liberates sentient beings with skilful means. Śākyamuni was considered but one of these forms. The true Buddha supports the manifested forms that can appear in the worlds of the ten directions. In Mahāyāna Buddhism, the former aspect was developed and divided into the concept of the *dharmakāya* and the concept of the *sambhogakāya* while the latter aspect was developed into the concept of *nirmāṇakāya*. Thus, the Mahāsāṃghikas are the originators of the idea of the *nirmāṇakāya*, and the manifested forms can have many embodiments. Furthermore, they also introduced the theory of numerous Buddhas existing in other worlds.

##### 1. The Origin of Mahāsāṃghika Buddhology

In the case of the Mahāsāṃghikas, unlike the Sarvāstivādins, there is not many literature left for us to make a comprehensive study of their concept of the Buddha. There are only three texts available, namely the *Mahāvastu*, the *\*Lokānuvartanasūtra* and Vasumitra's treatise on the doctrines of early Indian Buddhist schools. Scholars have already confirmed the first two works as belonging to the Mahāsāṃghika or its sub-sect, the Lokottaravāda.<sup>2</sup> The concept of the Buddha of the Mahāsāṃghikas as

presented in these three works is of notable significance. The Buddha is thoroughly idealized to the extent that the historical Buddha is looked upon only as a manifestation, and it is the omnipotent and omniscient aspects of the Buddha that is meaningful to them.

The transcendental concept of the Buddha of the Mahāsāṃghikas in all probability originated from the development of superhuman identity for the Buddha as discussed in the first chapter. As the Mahāsāṃghikas were faithful followers, they believed in every word of the Buddha and interpreted the passages associated with miracles in the early *sūtras* in an idealistic way. There is a good example in the *Vibhāṣā* that shows clearly how the Mahāsāṃghikas interpreted such passages in the early *sūtras*. In both the *\*Saṃyuktāgama* and the *Aṅguttaranikāya*, there is a passage that asserts that although the Tathāgata was born in the world and abided in the world, he was not defiled by the worldly *dharmas*.<sup>3</sup> The Mahāsāṃghikas understood and interpreted this passage idealistically, claiming that the Buddha is pure without any *āsrava dharmas*, and this includes his *rūpakāya*, the physical body.<sup>4</sup> However, the Sarvāstivādins interpreted the same passage differently. According to them, the phrase ‘the Tathāgata was born in the world and abided in the world’ meant that the *rūpakāya* appearing in the world was impure, while ‘he was not defiled by the world’ referred to the pure *dharmakāya*.<sup>5</sup> Reading this passage in context, we can understand that the Buddha proclaimed this since he had eradicated *āsravas*, the causes for rebirth in this world.<sup>6</sup> Hence, that the Tathāgata was pure purported to an ethical sense, not a physical sense. In the *Vibhāṣā* one finds this very same passage three times, and the idea conjoined with the Mahāsāṃghika argument. This is a typical specimen of the Mahāsāṃghika exegesis of the early *sūtras*.<sup>7</sup> There are many pieces of evidence found in the early *sūtras* to support the assertion that the Mahāsāṃghikas interpreted the canonical passages in an idealistic way.

The most prominent evidence for the origin of Mahāsāṃghika Buddhology is the *Acchariyābbhūtasutta* of the *Majjhimanikāya* which is also found in the Chinese

\**Madhyamāgama* with a similar title, but with additional descriptions of miracles. The Pāli *sutta* provides exclusively the description of twenty miracles that occurred between the Bodhisattva's descent from Tuṣita heaven and the time of his birth on earth, while its Chinese counterpart mentions twenty-three miracles, only ten of them occurring after the Buddha's birth.<sup>8</sup> The terms used to describe the Buddha in these two versions are also different. The Pāli *sutta* uses the term Bodhisattva implying that he was not yet enlightened, while the Chinese version uses the term 'World Honoured One' (Bhagavat), probably indicating that his appearance on earth was only a manifestation. These descriptions concerning the birth of the Buddha are congruent in both versions although the *sūtra* was transmitted in two different traditions, namely the Theravāda and the Mahāyāna. This fact in itself suggests the antiquity of such depiction.

The story of the Buddha's birth in the above *sūtra* is as follows. The Buddha descended into his mother's womb from Tuṣita heaven and resided there for exactly ten months without being sullied and smeared by impurities. Right after his birth, he took seven steps and declared that he was the foremost in the world and that this was his last birth. A great immeasurable light illuminated the world, lighting up the darkest place where the sun and moon cannot penetrate. The ten thousandfold world system shook, quaked and trembled. The last two natural events occurred twice, at the time of the Buddha's descent from the Tuṣita heaven and at the time of his birth. In the entire process, the Buddha is described as fully aware and mindful of what was taking place. This account of the story shows clearly that the Buddha was considered a transcendental being.

The first half of the *Nālakasutta* of the *Suttanipāta* is perhaps a forerunner of this story and serves as a basis for the ideas developed in the *Acchariyābbhūtasutta*, for most scholars think that the *Suttanipāta* contains some of the earliest *suttas*.<sup>9</sup> In the beginning, the *Nālakasutta* mentions that at the birth of the Buddha, gods were delighted and danced happily in heaven.<sup>10</sup> Upon perceiving this, the seer Asita

inquired about the reason for their happiness, and the gods replied that an incomparable being, the best among all, was born in the country of the Śākya in Lumbini garden. He would cause the wheel of the Dhamma to turn for the benefit and happiness of beings. This simple description of the birth of the Buddha contains the fundamental ideas found in the *Acchariyābbhūtasutta* that the birth of the Buddha on earth was a wondrous event with the definite purpose of liberating sentient beings. The *Acchariyābbhūtasutta* represents an advanced form of depiction of the Buddha's birth with detailed descriptions of it as a wondrous event. This depiction is further applied to all the other six past Buddhas in the *Mahāpadānasutta* of the *Dīghanikāya* for all the miracles about Gautama's birth in the *Acchariyābbhūtasutta* are found in this *sutta* in exactly the same format and style. The story of the Buddha's descent into his mother's womb from Tuṣita heaven has become a formula in the *Mahāpadānasutta*. This *sutta* explains that it is in the nature of things (*dhammatā*) that all Buddhas in their last birth descend into the wombs of their mothers from the Tuṣita heaven.<sup>11</sup> All the other miracles accompanying the birth of a Buddha are also said to be in the nature of things.

In the *Nālakasutta*, there is an important statement saying that the Buddha's birth on earth was for the definite purpose of liberating sentient beings. If we trace further the sources of the above statement, it can be found in both the Chinese translation of the *\*Saṃyuktāgama* and the Pāli *Aṅguttaranikāya*. In one passage, the Buddha instructed thus: "Monks, were not three states found existing in the world, the Tathāgata would not arise in the world, an arahant rightly enlightened; nor would the dhamma-discipline proclaimed by the Tathāgata be shown in the world. What are the three states? Birth, decay and death... But since these three states are found, therefore, the Tathāgata does arise in the world, an arahant rightly enlightened, and the dhamma-discipline proclaimed by the Tathāgata is shown in the world."<sup>12</sup> This passage suggests that the advent of the Buddha in the world is not accidental like that of the ordinary sentient beings driven by *karma*, but possesses a clear aim to benefit

suffering beings. This is significant because the assertion is put in the mouth of the Buddha himself, whereas in both the *Nālakasutta* and the *Acchariyābbhūtasutta*, the statement is said to have been spoken by the gods and Ānanda respectively. The *Nālakasutta* may have drawn its notion concerning the birth of the Buddha from this passage in the *Āṅguttaranikāya* or the \**Samyuktāgama*.

This analysis concerning the Buddha's birth suggests that there are at least four stages for its development. The passage quoted above from the *Samyuktāgama* and the *Āṅguttaranikāya* does not suggest anything mysterious about the rise of the Tathāgata in the world, but it does provide a source of ideas for later developments. This is the first stage of the birth depiction. The *Nālakasutta* represents perhaps the second stage of the birth depiction. The birth of the Buddha is already considered as a wonderful event here. This form of depiction is fully developed in the *Acchariyābbhūtasutta* which contains the entire episode of Gautama's birth replete with all miracles. This I would suggest to be considered the third stage. At the fourth stage, the story of the Buddha's birth finally became a theory in the *Mahāpadānasutta*, subsequently applied to all Buddhas. All Buddhist traditions transmitted this theory in their literature, and up to the present time, both the Mahāyāna and the Theravāda traditions concur on it. Thus, these developments of the theory concerning the Buddha's birth must have taken place before the split of Buddhism into different schools. It is thus evident that in early Buddhism, the faithful had already idealised the Buddha and considered the birth of the Buddha on earth not as an ordinary event, but as an atypical event (*adbhuta*). The purpose of his birth is clear, that is to become enlightened "for the benefit and happiness of all sentient beings". However, before the enlightenment, the aspirant was deemed a Bodhisattva.

Thus from such ideas and theories found in early scriptures the Mahāsāṃghikas asserted that all Buddhas are supramundane (*lokottara*).<sup>13</sup> The *Acchariyābbhūtasutta* provides some vital statements that served as repositories of the transcendental Buddha of the Mahāsāṃghikas.

First, the Bodhisattva was fully aware and mindful of all events taking place at his birth. Second, the bodhisattva was not sullied and smeared by impurities when he was born. Third, his mother could see him in her womb just as seeing a gem in her hand. The *\*Lokānuvartanasūtra* states that the Bodhisattva was not born from the sexual union of father and mother and his body was magically produced, like an illusion.<sup>14</sup> Fourth, the Bodhisattva's mother gave birth while standing. According to Vasumitra, the Mahāsāṃghikas asserted that all Bodhisattvas are born from the right side when they come out from their mothers' wombs. Fifth, the Bodhisattva took seven steps and spoke right after his birth. The *\*Lokānuvartanasūtra* explicitly states that it is in conformity with the ways of the world that the Buddha made such a show when he was born and uttered the words: "In the whole world no-one surpasses me! I shall deliver men of the ten directions!"<sup>15</sup> This suggests that adherents held that these events could not happen for an ordinary man, but only to a person who was enlightened and who displayed them purposely. It is more than probable that from these ideas the compilers of both the *Mahāvastu* and the *\*Lokānuvartanasūtra* explained that every act of the Buddha on earth was similarly to a display for the welfare and happiness of men.<sup>16</sup> The Buddha followed the ways of the world just as much as he followed the transcendental ways. He made a show of standing, walking, sitting and lying down, but he was never tired. He washed his feet and body, though there was no dirt; he cleansed his mouth, though it smelled like a lotus. He ate though he was not hungry, and so forth. These things, the compilers explain, are all due to his being an embodiment of the effects of good actions. Thus, foundations have been set in early Buddhism, and it was the Mahāsāṃghikas who thoroughly idealised the Buddha and asserted that he had become enlightened eons ago.

Apart from the above major evidence, there are another six passages supporting the above theory of Mahāsāṃghikas' Buddhology. First, the *Lokānuvartanasūtra* states that "even if the thunderbolts of the ten directions are combined together to make one sound, it cannot shake one hair of the Buddha because he makes a show of



entering into the *samādhi* of no sound.”<sup>17</sup> A similar story is found in the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*. The Buddha told the visitor Pukkusa that once, while he was in meditation, the falling rain began to beat and splash, and the lightning flashed forth, and the thunderbolts crashed; and two peasant brothers and four oxen were killed, but he did not hear a sound.<sup>18</sup> There are some striking similarities in the two descriptions of the Buddha’s *samādhi*: first, the Buddha is in *samādhi*, second, the thunderbolts, and third, the Buddha heard no sound at all. It seems obvious that the description in the *\*Lokānuvartanasūtra* is based on the passage in the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*.

Second, the Mahāsāṃghikas asserted that the length of the life of the Buddha is limitless.<sup>19</sup> In fact, the long life span of the Buddha seems to have been considered by the early compilers of the *Nikāyas* and the *Āgamas*. In all versions of the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*, it is stated that the Buddha deliberately gave up the remainder of his life at the request of Māra, but if he so wished, he could have lived for a *kalpa* or to the end of a *kalpa*.<sup>20</sup> Since a *kalpa* is an extremely long time, the Mahāsāṃghikas naturally held that the life span of the Buddha is limitless.<sup>21</sup> This also supports the assertion that the transcendental conception of the Buddha took root in the minds of the Buddhists at a very early date.

Third, according to Vasumitra, the Mahāsāṃghikas asserted that in all that has been expounded by the World-honoured One, there is nothing which is not in conformity with the truth (*ayathārtha*).<sup>22</sup> In the *Anguttara*, Bhikkhu Uttara said to Sakka, “Even so, O King, whatsoever be well spoken, all that is the word of the Exalted One, Arahant, the fully Awakened One, wholly based thereon is both what we and others say.”<sup>23</sup> Thus according to this statement, whatever is well spoken are the words of the Buddha and whatever the Buddha spoke must have been well spoken. The early Buddhists already thought that all the statements of the Buddha were well spoken. The Mahāsāṃghikas would naturally interpret this passage as meaning that all the words of the Buddha represent the exposition of the Dharma. This is very important to the Mahāsāṃghikas because it is based on such statements in the early

*sūtras* that they held every single word of the Buddha as being the truth. The Mahāsāṃghikas' attitude regarding the words of the Buddha was thus one of the main reasons for their concept of a transcendental Buddha.

Fourth, according to the *\*Lokānuvartanasūtra*, the body of the Buddha being like gold, could not get dirty, and being like a diamond, was also supremely pure. His feet were like lotuses to which dust would not cleave, and the Buddha had the mark of supreme taste.<sup>24</sup> All such things remind us of three of the thirty-two major marks of the Buddha described in the early *sūtras*. (1) The complexion of the Buddha's body resembles the colour of gold, (2) his skin is so smooth that no dust cleaves to his body and (3) the Buddha's taste is supremely keen. The links between the description of the *\*Lokānuvartanasūtra* and three of the thirty-two major marks are clear: gold, purity and taste. The various attributes of the Buddha found in the *\*Lokānuvartanasūtra* are perhaps developed along the line of the thirty-two major marks.

Fifth, the *\*Lokānuvartanasūtra* states that the Buddha knew the *dharma*s of innumerable other Buddhas in other Buddha-lands (*Buddhakṣetra*) of the ten directions.<sup>25</sup> In the *Samyutta*, it is said that the Buddha knew much more than what he taught to his disciples, and he compared what he had actually taught to the leaves held in his hand in comparison to the leaves in the forest.<sup>26</sup> The *Samyutta* already suggests that the knowledge of the Buddha is immeasurable. The Mahāsāṃghikas, on this basis, interpreted the knowledge of the Buddha as being omniscient.

Sixth, according to Vasumitra, the Mahāsāṃghikas asserted that the power of the Tathāgata is also limitless.<sup>27</sup> This is perhaps a general statement based on the miracles of the Buddha described in the early *sūtras* such as the miracles through which he converted the three Kāśyapa brothers right after his enlightenment, and the bandit Aṅgulimālya.<sup>28</sup>

All these pieces of evidence suggest that the Mahāsāṃghikas were a group of followers with resolute faith. As Vasumitra's treatise attributes to the Mahāsāṃghikas the assertion that every word of the Buddha is the preaching of the Dharma, this

seems to be a clear indication that the Mahāsāṃghikas accepted every word in the *Nikāyas* and the *Āgamas* as the true sayings of the Buddha himself. With such belief, they had developed a transcendental concept of the Buddha on the basis of the superhuman qualities of the Buddha described in the early *sūtras*.

## 2. The Pure Rūpakāya

Contrary to the Sarvāstivādins, the Mahāsāṃghikas believed in a pure *rūpakāya* of the Buddha. They were the faithful followers of the Buddha and believed in his every word. So they interpreted the relevant passages in the *sūtras* in an idealistic way. The reasons for their belief are found in two texts.

Firstly, it is stated in the *Vibhāṣā*: “The Vibhajyavādins and the Mahāsāṃghikas regard the *rūpakāya* of the Buddha as pure. Why do they say so? It is because the *sūtras* say: ‘The Tathāgata was born in the world and abided in the world, yet was not defiled by the worldly *dharmas*.’ They again state that the Buddha had eliminated all the *kleśas* and habitual force (*vāsanā*), and thus the *rūpakāya* was pure.”<sup>29</sup>

Secondly, in his *\*Abhidharmanyāyāmusārasāstra*, Saṅghabhadra also states: “The Mahāsāṃghikas again said thus: all the *dharmas* in the body of the Tathāgata are pure and thus it is a place for refuge because the *sūtras* say that the body (of the Buddha) is trained or cultivated (*bhāvanā*). The *sūtras* say: ‘the body and the mind are trained or cultivated (*bhāvanā*)’. If the mind (of the Buddha) is pure after training or cultivation, so is his body.”<sup>30</sup>

There are three reasons put forward by the Mahāsāṃghikas for their belief in the pure *rūpakāya* as described in these two texts: (1) though the Tathāgata was born and lived in the world, he was not defiled by the world because he was transcendental. It was only a manifestation. (2) Since the Buddha had eliminated all the *kleśas* and habitual force, he was pure both mentally and physically. (3) The Buddha had cultivated both his mind and body, and if the mind was pure, logically so would his physical body be pure. Apparently, the Mahāsāṃghikas interpreted literally or

idealistically the two passages in the *sūtras* upon which they established their concept of the *rūpakāya*. This was due to their attitude towards the words of the Buddha that every word that the Tathāgata preached was the truth, as stated in Vasumitra's treatise.<sup>31</sup> This led them to conclude that the *rūpakāya* of the Buddha should be conceived as pure and transcendental, and as a result of their belief, the emphasis of the concept of the Buddha shifted from the historical Buddha to a transcendental one. As this is entirely in contrast with the Sarvāstivāda concept of the impure *rūpakāya* of the Buddha, the two schools debated this point, an issue which will be discussed in fifth chapter.

The Mahāsāṃghikas attributed to the *rūpakāya* of the Buddha the following qualities as described in the three works available. First, according to Vasumitra, they asserted that the *rūpakāya* of the Buddha is limitless.<sup>32</sup> This perhaps refers to the idea of the *nirmāṇakāya* that can manifest in numerous forms and numbers, because the Mahāsāṃghikas considered Śākyamuni as one of the transformation bodies. They had already conceived the idea of the *nirmāṇakāya* although they did not use the term. This is justified where the *\*Lokānuvartanasūtra* states that the Buddha can appear in numerous forms in countless Buddha-lands at the same time.<sup>33</sup>

Second, according to both the *\*Lokānuvartanasūtra* and the *Mahāvastu*, the body of the Buddha was diamond like, and hence he was not really subject to decay, old age, tiredness, illness, hunger, thirst, and human waste, to name but a few. Such things as recorded in the early *sūtras* were only a display for the sake and good of the worldly people.<sup>34</sup>

Third, the physical strength of the Buddha was so great that he could shake the Buddha-lands of the ten directions with one finger, and dry up the water in the sea by simply blowing it.<sup>35</sup> The text does not say whether the physical strength of the Buddha declined after a certain age as it was only the Sarvāstivādins who asserted that it declined after the age of fifty-five. But as the Mahāsāṃghika concept of the Buddha is transcendental, it must be deemed as a permanent attribute that would not decline.

The \**Lokānuvartanasūtra* also mentions that the Buddha had a special light that could illuminate the worlds of the ten directions, but he made a show of having a light of seven *chi* just to be in conformity with the ways of the world.<sup>36</sup> As discussed in chapter two, the Sarvāstivādins attributed to the Buddha a one-fathom halo radiating from his body. It seems that the Mahāsāṃghikas are in agreement with the Sarvāstivādins in saying that the Buddha was endowed with special attributes such as light. This however, was still considered a display.

With regard to the physical body of the Buddha, the Mahāsāṃghikas postulated a kind of Buddha who is over and above the sentient beings and who comes into the world with a definite purpose to save the suffering people through manifestation. For them the Buddha is omniscient and omnipotent, but not as yet omnipresent. This is the first aspect of the concept of the Buddha that the Mahāsāṃghikas laid their emphasis on. On the other hand, Śākyamuni was considered a transformation body, *nirmāṇakāya*. Although the term has not been used, the connotations and implications are self-evident. Here we see the emergence of the idea of the *nirmāṇakāya* which originated in the Mahāsāṃghikas. This is the second aspect of their concept of the Buddha, namely that the Tathāgata makes a display in the world for the sake of sentient beings. However, in all three texts, the Mahāsāṃghikas did not use the terms *dharmakāya* and *rūpakāya* as a pair, nor did they formulate a theory on these two bodies as the Sarvāstivādins did. Contrarily, they had one Buddha body in mind. This difference between these two schools became distinct in the MPPŚ where the concept of the Buddha, although based on the idea of the Mahāsāṃghikas, was actually developed on the basis of the two-body theory of the Sarvāstivāda School.

### 3. Aspects of the Buddha

According to the Mahāsāṃghikas, the Buddha is always in the state of *samādhi*. Therefore, (1) he experiences neither sleep nor dreams because sleep is caused by the ignorant or unsettled mind (*viprakṛta*) which is not in the state of *samādhi*, while

dreams are caused by phenomena lodged in the mind. The Buddha was held to possess neither of these.<sup>37</sup> (2) The Buddha can preach the Dharma without making any arrangement of words and sentences, his speech just flows of its own accord. All the words of the Buddha preach the Dharma and there is nothing which is not in conformity with the truth.<sup>38</sup> (3) The Buddha can understand things with his mind in one *kṣaṇa* because the Buddha has trained his mind for numerous *kalpas*.<sup>39</sup>

The Mahāsāṃghikas asserted that many thousand myriad *koṭis* of *asaṃkhyeyakalpas* ago the Buddha accomplished the practice of *prajñāpāramitā*. In other words, the Buddha attained enlightenment not in this life and in this world, but aeons ago. His appearance in this world was out of compassion for suffering people. In order to save them, he made a display of being born as a man and followed the conventions of the world such as *karma*. In the ultimate sense, the Buddha is unaffected by anything.<sup>40</sup>

According to the \**Lokānuvartanasūtra*, the Buddha is omniscient in the sense that he knows the *dharmas* of all Buddhas of the ten directions as well as of the past, present and future. He understands the essence of the *dharmas* that is emptiness and the nature of the *dharmas* that is formless, he also knows that there is no being in the past, present or future.<sup>41</sup> But he preaches numerous *dharmas* to the people in conformity with the ways of the world by one of the numerous created forms (*nirmāṇakāya*).

The Buddha is fundamentally empty (*sūnya*), but out of compassion for the world, he made a display of wearing clothes, staying in a place, appearing and disappearing according to the likes and dislikes of the world. In reality, there is no coming and going for the Buddha.<sup>42</sup> This was a new development that had never been discussed in early Buddhism, but influenced by the \**Prajñāpāramitāsūtras*, in which the concept of *sūnyatā* is the central theme. Here we have a clue as to how the Mahāsāṃghikas reached the view that the *rūpakāya* of the Buddha was limitless, for they identify the Buddha with *sūnyatā*. Since *sūnyatā* is limitless in space and ageless

in time, so is the *rūpakāya* of the Buddha.

#### 4. *The Origin of Contemporary Buddhas*

The belief in the simultaneous existence of many Buddhas but in different Buddha-lands (*buddhakṣetra*) was a subject of contention amongst the early Buddhist schools because it is said in the early *sūtras* that there are no two Buddhas arising concurrently in one world-system.<sup>43</sup> It is most probably the Mahāsāṃghikas who first thought that other Buddhas also exist apart from Śākyamuni at the present era, since they believed that the Buddha could manifest himself in numerous forms and worlds in the ten directions.

Some Japanese scholars have already studied this question in an attempt to establish from which school the ideas about 'contemporary Buddhas' originated. Mochizuki Shinko and others assert that this idea is Mahāyānistic, and therefore should have come into being along with Mahāyāna Buddhism.<sup>44</sup> But Nishio Kyoyu suggests that the idea of 'contemporary Buddhas' originated with the Mahāsāṃghikas.<sup>45</sup> Studying the question of 'contemporary Buddhas' as mentioned in both the *\*Saṃyuktāgama* of the Kāśyapiyas and in the *\*Ekottarāgama* of the Mahāsāṃghikas, he argues that the concept of the Buddha in the *\*Ekottarāgama* is different from what is found in early Buddhism, and thus it leaves room for the idea of 'contemporary Buddhas' to develop. However, there are many strata of development in the *\*Ekottarāgama*, which embraces even Mahāyāna ideas, as we have already discussed in chapter two. This *Āgama* also mentions a Tathāgata named Qiguang (special light) who Nishio Kyoyu thinks was apocryphal and inserted into the text accidentally. Hence, there is every possibility that even in the *\*Ekottarāgama*, the idea of 'contemporary Buddhas' may have been inserted by the Mahāyānists. After a comparative study of the relevant *sūtras* in the Chinese *Āgamas* and the Pāli *Nikāyas* concerning the issue in question, Kotatsu Fujita maintains that there is no mention of 'contemporary Buddhas' in the early *sūtras*, but only some remote

implications.<sup>46</sup> All the above studies were made more than forty years ago, and with the advancement of Buddhist studies, there is new evidence that has been brought to light in support of Nishio Kyoyu's suggestion.

The question of 'contemporary Buddhas' is a controversial issue which has been discussed in at least eight ancient texts, amongst which the MPPŚ is the earliest one. It is stated: "The Buddha did not say whether there are or not other present Buddhas in the ten directions, in the *śrāvaka* Dharma."<sup>47</sup> Here, the term "*śrāvaka* Dharma" is used in contrast with the terms such as "bodhisattva Dharma" and "Mahāyāna Dharma" by the author of the MPPŚ, an indication of the early Buddhist teachings contained in the *sūtras* of the *Nikāyas* and the *Āgamas*.<sup>48</sup> So according to this statement, there is no mention of 'contemporary Buddhas' in the early *sūtras*, and even in the present Pāli *Nikāyas* there is no mention of them at all. However, 'contemporary Buddhas' are mentioned in many places in the extant Chinese translations of the *Āgamas* such as the *Dīrgha*, the *Samyukta* and the *Ekottara*.<sup>49</sup> The only explanation for this inconsistency is that it has probably been inserted into the *Āgamas* by the transmitters according to the teachings of the schools they belonged to. Scholars have already made attempts to ascertain the schools to which the *Āgamas* belong, but they are far from reaching a consensus. Therefore, it is difficult to decide from which school the idea of 'contemporary Buddhas' originated.<sup>50</sup>

The author of the MPPŚ argued for the existence of 'contemporary Buddhas' in two places.<sup>51</sup> In the summary of his arguments, he gave two main reasons. First, he quoted a verse from the \**Dīrghāgama* in which Vaiśravaṇa praised the Buddha saying "Homage to the Buddhas of the past, present and future, and I also take refuge in Buddha Śākyamuni as long as my life endures."<sup>52</sup> Thus the author argued that there should be many Buddhas at present since Vaiśravaṇa paid homage to the Buddhas of the present era. Second, although the *sūtras* state that there are no two Buddhas in one great *trisāhasra* universe, yet there are many great *trisāhasra* universes, and so there should be many Buddhas at any given time. With regard to the first reason, Lamotte



located the verse in the \**Āṭānāṭikasūtra*.<sup>53</sup> However, this *sūtra* is not found in the Chinese translation of the \**Dīrghāgama*. There is however an independent translation of it made by Fatian in 960-1127.<sup>54</sup> This *sūtra* is also found in the Pāli *Dīghanikāya*, entitled the *Āṭānāṭiyasuttanta*, but there is no verse in it which is recited by Vaiśravaṇa in praise of the Buddha. Lamotte thinks that the *sūtra*, from which the author of the MPPŚ quoted the above verse, belonged to the Sarvāstivāda school. He has given two reasons for his assertion. (1) The Sarvāstivāda had “eighteen great *sūtras*” and according to the \**Daśādhyāyavinaya* of this school, one of them is entitled *A zha na jian* (Lamotte: A tch’a na kien) meaning “Sūtra of Conciliation of the Spirits and Demons”.<sup>55</sup> Lamotte thinks that this refers to the \**Āṭānāṭikasūtra*. (2) Four of the “eighteen great *sūtras*” have been found in Chotscho in central Asia and published by Waldschmidt. Therefore, the *sūtra*, from which the author of the MPPŚ quoted the verse, must belong to the Sarvāstivāda.

This inference made by Lamotte may not be correct for, according to the MPPŚ, the Sarvāstivādins state: “There are no (contemporary) Buddhas of the ten directions in our Dharma. There are one hundred past Buddhas such as Śākyamuni and Ju chen ruo (Krakucchanda?) and five hundred future Buddhas such as Maitreya.”<sup>56</sup> Thus, the Sarvāstivādins would not have a *sūtra* which contains a contradictory teaching by stating that there are many ‘contemporary Buddhas’. This is because they advocated that there is only one Buddha, Śākyamuni, in the present era, even though he had already attained *parinirvāṇa*. So there is no existence of contemporary Buddhas at present. The author of the MPPŚ, therefore, probably quoted the above verse from another version of the \**Āṭānāṭikasūtra* transmitted by another school. Those who might have inserted the verse into the *sūtra*, probably did it in support of their teaching about contemporary Buddhas. This is highly possible because as discussed above, the Theravāda also has an *Āṭānāṭiyasuttanta*, but it does not contain the verse that praises the Buddha. The school that had the version of the \**Āṭānāṭikasūtra* containing the above verse was probably the Mahāsāṃghika, because according to

their teaching, the Buddha can manifest himself in numerous bodies in numerous worlds at the same time.<sup>57</sup>

In the second reason given in the MPPŚ in support of ‘contemporary Buddhas’, the author made an inference on the basis of a passage found in the \**Samyuktāgama*. He argued that there are conditions and causes for Buddhas to arise in the worlds in the ten directions because in the \**Samyuktāgama*, it is said that there are numerous worlds in the ten directions in which there are numerous suffering sentient beings. The Buddha has also said that the Tathāgata does arise in the world where there is old age, sickness and death.<sup>58</sup> So there must be other contemporary Buddhas in the worlds in the ten directions since there are suffering beings in them.<sup>59</sup>

The passage quoted by the author of the MPPŚ is found in both the Chinese translations of the \**Samyuktāgama*. The first translation was made by Guṇabhadra, and the translator of the second is unknown. Guṇabhadra’s translation runs thus: “Just as the heavy rain that leaves no empty place in the east, in the west, in the south and in the north, in the same way, there are numerous worlds in the east, in the west, in the south and in the north. (Some of them are) in the *kalpa* of formation while (others are) in the *kalpa* of dissolution... Thus, the living beings who are subject to birth and death from beginningless time and abide in the *samsāra* as dark as a long night, know no origin of suffering.”<sup>60</sup>

The second translation reads thus: “When it rains heavily there is no empty space in the east, in the west, in the south, in the north and in the four corners. Living beings in the numerous worlds in the east live happily, while other numerous worlds with countless beings are in (the *kalpa* of) dissolution, still other numerous worlds are empty with no living beings in them. It is the same with regard to the south, the west, the north, the four corners, above and beneath, (where living beings) are in the cycles of birth and death from beginningless time.”<sup>61</sup>

Comparing these two passages, Guṇabhadra’s translation mentions the worlds of the *four* cardinal directions while the second translation mentions that of the *ten*

directions. So the author of the MPPŚ probably quoted the passage from the Sanskrit version that is closer to or is actually the original from which the second translation was made. However, there is no consensus amongst the scholars regarding which school the *\*Saṃyuktāgama* belonged. Guṇabhadra's translation is generally attributed to the Sarvāstivāda and the second translation to the Mūlasarvāstivāda.<sup>62</sup> So this suggests that the idea of the worlds of the ten directions may have originated from the Mūlasarvāstivāda, a sub-sect of the Sarvāstivāda school. This provides a basis for the idea of the existence of 'contemporary Buddhas' of the ten directions.

With the advancement of Buddhist studies, we can perhaps be more confident in saying that the idea of 'contemporary Buddhas' originated in the Mahāsāṃghika school. This seems to be the case because scholars have come to a general agreement that the *\*Lokānuvartanasūtra* belongs to the Mahāsāṃghika school, and this *sūtra* mentions the Buddhas of the ten directions in several places. For instance, it states: "The strength of the Buddha cannot be resisted and he can shake with one finger the Buddha-lands of the ten directions."<sup>63</sup> "The Buddha knows all the *dharmas* of the countless Buddhas of the ten directions."<sup>64</sup> "The Buddha can manifest himself in numerous bodies (*nirmāṇakāya*) and appear in countless Buddha-lands, but the body of the Buddha neither increases nor decreases."<sup>65</sup> "All Buddhas have one body, the body of the Dharma."<sup>66</sup> Thus it is evident that the Mahāsāṃghikas already had the notion of the Buddhas in the worlds in the ten directions, and they probably regarded them as the manifested bodies of the Buddha.

There are seven other works in which the idea of 'contemporary Buddhas' is discussed. They are the *\*Yogācārabhūmiśāstra*, *Mahāyānasamgraha* and its *bhāṣya*, *Kośa*, *\*Bodhisattvabhūmidharasūtra*, *\*Abhidharmanyāyānusāraśāstra* of Saṅghabhadra and *\*Mahāyānāvataṛakaśāstra* of Sthiramati.<sup>67</sup> All seven works argue in support of the existence of 'contemporary Buddhas' for two reasons. First, just as stated in the MPPŚ, they also hold that there are other contemporary Buddhas in the other great *trisāhasra* universes and that there are numerous worlds in the ten

directions. Second, there should be many Buddhas because there are many bodhisattvas who practise for *bodhi*. Although the bodhisattva ideal is primarily emphasized in the Mahāyāna, the concept of ‘many bodhisattvas’ was already prevalent in Mahāsāṃghika literature. Vasumitra used plural forms in his treatise when he discussed the teaching of the school on the concept of bodhisattva.<sup>68</sup> So this may also suggest that the idea of ‘contemporary Buddhas’ originated in the Mahāsāṃghikas.

The idea of the contemporary Buddhas in the worlds in the ten directions must predate the rising of Mahāyāna Buddhism because the *Daoxingboruojing*, the earliest Chinese translation of the \**Aṣṭasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitāsūtra* (*Aṣṭa*), already treats the idea as established. For instance, it is stated: “Śāriputra, Māra cannot stop him (the bodhisattva) in the mid-way. Why? It is because the present Buddhas in innumerable Buddha-lands in the ten directions protect *prajñāpāramitā*. Those who recite, preach, explain it and those who learn, listen to and write it, are also protected by the power of Buddhas.”<sup>69</sup> “All the present Tathāgatas, Arhats, Saṃyaksambuddhas in innumerable Buddha-lands in the ten directions have attained omniscience by practising the six *pāramitās*.”<sup>70</sup> The *Daoxingboruojing* was translated into Chinese in the second century CE and Conze thinks that the basic *Prajñāpāramitā* probably dates back to 100 BCE.<sup>71</sup> Several scholars have suggested that the *Prajñāpāramitā* probably developed among the Mahāsāṃghikas in Southern India, in the Andhra country, on the Kṛṣṇā river.<sup>72</sup> The reason for this is because near Amarāvati and Dhānyakataka, the Mahāsāṃghikas had two famous monasteries, which gave their names to the schools of the Pūrvaśailas and of the Aparāśailas. These schools had a copy of the *Prajñāpāramitā* in Prakrit.<sup>73</sup> And what is more, the concept of the Buddha in the *Daoxingboruojing* is based on that of the Mahāsāṃghikas (this will be discussed in chapter four). The Mahāsāṃghikas must, at least, have had a close relation with the *Prajñāpāramitā*. In view of such evidence, we should be more inclined to think that the idea of ‘contemporary Buddhas’ in the world of the ten

directions originated in the Mahāsāṃghika School.

## 2. Other Schools

### 1. *The Theravāda*

The Theravāda has basically a similar concept of the Buddha to that of the Sarvāstivāda. They are of the opinion that the *rūpakāya* of the Buddha is subject to all the physical frailties of a human being; it is the attainment of *bodhi* that makes a being a Buddha. Buddhas are above benevolence and compassion, but they do show benevolence and compassion to living beings.<sup>74</sup> Buddhas possess the knowledge of all aspects of the *dharma*s and a complete and detailed knowledge of all things. The arhats can, at most, have only partial knowledge.<sup>75</sup> As far as liberation is concerned there is no difference between a Buddha and an arhat, and the Buddhas are superior to the arhats only on account of the fact that the former are promulgators of the Dharma while the arhats are only followers of it.<sup>76</sup> As T. Endo has already studied comprehensively the concept of the Buddha of the Theravāda, we will not deal with it here in detail.

### 2. *The Mahīśāsaka*

As a Hīnayāna school, the Mahīśāsaka is much more conservative.<sup>77</sup> They maintain that the Buddha is not only to be included in the Saṃgha, but that even making a gift separately to the Buddha is not as meritorious as to the Saṃgha as a whole. The Buddha has one and the same path (*mārga*), and one and the same emancipation (*vimukti*) as in the *pratyekabuddhayāna* and *śrāvakayāna*.<sup>78</sup> So the Buddha is not much distinguishable from the arhats.

### 3. *The Dharmaguptaka*

The Dharmaguptakas differ with the Mahīśāsakas in that though the Buddha is

included in the Saṃgha, the merit of making offerings to the Buddha is greater than to the Saṃgha. The Buddha has the same emancipation (*vimukti*) as in the *pratyekabuddhayāna* and *śrāvakayāna*, but he is said to have followed a different path (*mārga*).<sup>79</sup>

#### 4. *The Sautrāntika*

According to the *Kośa*, they are of the opinion that there may be many Buddhas simultaneously.<sup>80</sup> There is also the noble path (*āryamārga*) among the ordinary people (*prthagjana*).<sup>81</sup>

#### 5. *The Vibhajyavāda*

There is a controversy amongst scholars as to who really constituted the Vibhajyavāda School.<sup>82</sup> However, scattered evidence found in the *Vibhāṣā* suggests that they were Mahāsāṃghika-Vibhajyavādins because they shared a similar view on the concept of Buddha as the Mahāsāṃghikas. First, they are also of the opinion that the *rūpakāya* of the Buddha is pure and without defilement (*kleśa*) because the *sūtras* say that the Tathāgata was born in the world, abided in the world, but he was not defiled by the world.<sup>83</sup> The Vibhajyavādins go further, stating that a pure mind can also cause birth or continuity such as that of the Buddha, as it is said in the *sūtras* that a bodhisattva in his last birth entered his mother's womb, then abided there and was born with right thought.<sup>84</sup> They assert that the Buddha was pure from the moment he entered his mother's womb. Second, like the Mahāsāṃghikas, they assert that the Buddha is always in *samādhi* because he abides in mindfulness and right view (*samyagdr̥ṣṭi*), hence the Buddha neither sleeps nor dreams because he has eliminated all hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*).<sup>85</sup>

The Vibhajyavādins also assert that all Buddhas attain one and the same full enlightenment (*saṃyaksambodhi*), which is everlasting, and they appear in the world together. Although there may be different Buddhas, enlightenment (*bodhi*) is the same.

Their argument is based on the *sūtra* that says: “the Buddha told the bhikṣus, ‘I have attained the old path’, so the divine path (*āryamārga*), which is the same to all Buddhas, is *asaṃskṛta*.”<sup>86</sup> Hence, they are also of the opinion that the conditioned genesis (*pratītyasamutpāda*) is *asaṃskṛta* because the *sūtras* say that regardless of whether the Buddha appears in the world or not, the Dharma abides in the world as it is. The Buddha was enlightened by this Dharma and also expounded it to others.<sup>87</sup>

In conclusion, the writer is of the opinion that the Mahāsāṃghikas’ belief in a transcendental Buddha originated from the teaching concerning the superhuman aspects of the Buddha developed in early Buddhism. The crucial point for such a development was their attitude towards the words of the Buddha, which led to their strong belief that all the words of the Tathāgata were the pronouncement of Dharma. As a result, they took literally whatever was said in the *Nikāyas* and the *Āgamas* as the true words of the Buddha. They arrived at the conclusion that the actual Buddha could not be an ordinary human, but a transcendental being who is omnipotent and eternal. The historical Buddha was only a transformation body that appeared in the world for the benefit and happiness of sentient beings. Such manifestations appear not only in this world, but in other world-systems as well. This is considered great skilful means of the Buddha. It follows therefore that other contemporary Buddhas should also exist in the worlds in the ten directions. Hence the Mahāsāṃghikas had already conceived of the idea of *nirmāṇakāya* at a very early stage, although they never used the term. This is shown in their literature to this day extant. Thus, two aspects of the concept of the Buddha of the Mahāsāṃghikas are distinct: the true Buddha and its manifested forms. These significant developments laid the doctrinal basis for the Mahāyāna concept of the Buddha. In the next chapter, we are going to discuss the concept of the *dharmakāya* in Mahāyāna, which was built upon the concept of the Buddha of the Mahāsāṃghikas.

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<sup>1</sup> The Mahāsāṃghikas asserted that all the words of the Buddha preach the Dharma

and there is nothing which is not in conformity with the truth. Vasumitra's \**Samayabhedavyūhacakra* translated by Xuanzang, T49, 15b.

<sup>2</sup> Paul Harrison, (1982), 213.

<sup>3</sup> T2, 28b12, A ii, 37, and S iii, 140.

<sup>4</sup> T27, 229a; 391c-392a; 871c.

<sup>5</sup> T27, 229a; 391c-392a; 871c.

<sup>6</sup> T2, 28b12.

<sup>7</sup> N. Dutt also thinks that the Mahāsāṃghika concept of the Buddha may well be based on the utterances found in the *Nikāyas*, such as "I am the all-conqueror; I am omniscient, I am untouched by all worldly objects. I am perfect in this world; I am a teacher incomparable; I am the only enlightened, tranquilized and have extinguished everything" in the *Majjhimanikāya*. See N. Dutt (1978b), 71. The quotation is from M i, 171.

<sup>8</sup> M iii, 118-124. T1, 469c-471c.

Table VI, Comparison of the miracles

The <i>Acchariyābbhūtasutta</i>	The Chinese translation
1. Mindful and fully aware, the Bodhisatta appeared in Tuṣita heaven.	1. The Bhagavat made a vow to be born in Tuṣita heaven at the time of Kāśyapa Buddha.
2. Mindful and fully aware, the Bodhisatta remained in the Tuṣita heaven.	2. The Bhagavat had three things better than his last birth when he remained in Tuṣita heaven: heavenly life, complexion and honour.
3. For the whole of his life-span, the Bodhisatta remained in the Tuṣita heaven.	
4. Mindful and fully aware, the Bodhisatta descended from Tuṣita heaven into his mother's womb.	
5. A great immeasurable light appeared in the world when the Bodhisatta descended into his mother's womb.	3. A great immeasurable light illuminated the world when the Bhagavat descended from Tuṣita heaven and entered his mother's womb.
6. The ten thousand-fold world system shook and quaked and trembled.	The world system quaked.
7. Four deities came to guard him when he descended into his mother's womb and nobody could harm either of them.	4. The Bhagavat resided on the right side in his mother's womb.
8. His mother became intrinsically virtuous when the Bodhisatta descended into her womb.	5. The Bhagavat resided in his mother's womb comfortably.
9. His mother had no sensual thought when the Bodhisatta descended into her womb.	
10. His mother obtained the five cords of sensual pleasure when the Bodhisatta descended into her womb.	



11. His mother had no afflictions but was blissful and could see him in her womb when the Bodhisatta descended.	
12. His mother died and was reborn in Tuṣita heaven seven days after the Bodhisatta's birth.	
13. His mother carried the Bodhisatta in her womb for exactly ten months.	
14. The Bodhisatta's mother gave him birth while standing.	
15. When the Bodhisatta was born, the gods received him first and then human beings.	10. When the Bhagavat was born the four gods received him.
16. When the Bodhisatta was born, he did not touch the earth, but was received by gods.	8. The Bhagavat was born without any difficulties.
17. When the Bodhisatta was born, he had not been sullied and smeared by impurities.	6. The Bhagavat was not sullied and smeared by impurities when he resided in his mother's womb. 9. The Bhagavat was not sullied and smeared by impurities when he was born.
18. Two jets of water poured down from heaven, one warm and one cool, to bathe him.	12. A large pool for bathing appeared in front of the Bhagavat's mother when he was born. 13. Two jets of water poured down from heaven, one warm and one cool, to bathe him.
19. When the Bodhisatta was born, he took seven steps and uttered the words: "I am the highest in the world; I am the best in the world; I am the foremost in the world. This is my last birth; now there is no more renewal of being for me."	11. The Bhagavat took seven steps when he was born.
20. When the Bodhisatta was born again immeasurable light appeared in the world and the ten thousand-fold world system quaked and shook.	7. When the Bhagavat was born again immeasurable light illuminated the world and the world system quaked and shook.
	14. Heavenly flowers fell upon the body of the newborn baby.
	15. The shadow of the Jambu tree, under which the Buddha as a young boy meditated, did not move in order to protect him from the heat. This most probably refers to the event that happened in the ploughing festival mentioned in the <i>Nidānakathā</i> .

	16. The shadow of the Tara tree, under which the Buddha was meditating after a meal, did not move in order to protect him from the heat.
	17. A monkey offered fruits to the Buddha when he was staying in the forest of Vaiśāli.
	18. The rain was held for sometime to wait for the Buddha to dry his sitting material while he was in Vaiśāli.
	19. The shadow of the Sāl tree, under which the Buddha meditated when he was in the forest, did not move in order to protect him from the heat.
	20. The Buddha did not hear the huge noise of the thunder when he was meditating in a cave.
	21. The place where the Buddha was staying was dry and dusty even after seven days of heavy rain although the surrounding area was flooded. This happened not long after the Buddha's enlightenment. This perhaps refers to the miracles performed by the Buddha to convert the three Kāśyapa brothers, the hair-matted ascetics.
	22. Māra followed the Buddha for six years but he did not achieve his goal so he gave up and went away. This is mentioned in the <i>Suttanipāta</i> verse 446, but seven not six years.
	23. The Buddha was mindful of his bodily reactions for seven years. This perhaps refers to the <i>ānāpāna-sati</i> meditation that the Buddha practised before his enlightenment as described in the <i>Mahāsaccaka Sutta</i> of the <i>Majjhimanikāya</i> .

<sup>9</sup> Scholars like V. Fausböll think that the *Suttanipāta* belongs to the oldest strata of Buddhist literature. Fausböll considers that the greater part of the Mahāvagga, and nearly the whole of the Aṭṭhakavagga are very old. He has arrived at this conclusion from two reasons, first from the language, and secondly from the contents. See V. Fausböll, 1881, p.xi. Thus the *Nālakasutta* perhaps falls into the later stage of development.

<sup>10</sup> The *Suttanipāta*, verses 679-698.

<sup>11</sup> D ii, 12-15.

<sup>12</sup> A v, p.144; T2, 95c, 199c. The English translation is adopted with a few changes from F. L. Woodward, *Gradual Sayings*, v, 99. The Chinese translation mentions the three states as old age, illness and death, in contrast with the Pāli version: birth, decay and death.

<sup>13</sup> J. Masuda, (1922), 18.

<sup>14</sup> T17, 751c.

<sup>15</sup> T17, 751c.

<sup>16</sup> The *Mahāvastu*, i, 167-70, the \**Lokānuvartanasūtra*, T17, 751c-752a.

<sup>17</sup> T17, 752b line 24-26.

<sup>18</sup> D ii, 130-133. In the four Chinese translations of the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*, this incident is also found, T1, 19a-b; 168a-b; 183c-184a; and 198a-b.

<sup>19</sup> J. Masuda, (1922), 20.

<sup>20</sup> T1, 15c; 165a; 180b; T24, 387c; the *Dīvyāvadāna*, 201; D ii, 103; S. v, 259; A iv, 309; the *Udāna*, vi, 62. According to the *Vibhāṣā*, (T27, 657b) there are two explanations about the Buddha's giving up his life span. The first one is that the Buddha gave up one third of his life because the life span of the Buddha is a hundred and twenty years. The second is that the Buddha gave up one fifth of his life because the life span of the Buddha is a hundred years. This of course is a rational explanation of the Sarvāstivādins.

<sup>21</sup> The term *kalpa* is the longest period of time in the Indian cosmology. It is an age, the life cycle of a world, or a universe, an unimaginably long period of time. According to Monier Williams, a *kalpa* is a fabulous period of time. It is a day of Brahma or one thousand Yugas, a period of four thousand-three hundred and twenty millions of years of mortals, measuring the duration of the world. A month of Brahma is supposed to contain thirty such Kalpas. According to the *Mahābhārata*, twelve months of Brahma constitute his year, and one hundred such years his lifetime; fifty years of Brahma' are supposed to have elapsed, and we are now in the *svetavārāha-kalpa* of the fifty-first; at the end of a *kalpa* the world is annihilated. The Buddhists are not in agreement on the length of a *kalpa*, except for it being an immeasurably long period of time. Monier Williams (1986), p.262c.

<sup>22</sup> J. Masuda, (1922), 19.

<sup>23</sup> A iv, 163-4. The translation is adapted from *The Book of the Gradual Sayings*, IV, 112.

<sup>24</sup> T17, 752a-b.

<sup>25</sup> T17, 752b.

<sup>26</sup> S v, 437.

<sup>27</sup> J. Masuda, (1922), 19.

<sup>28</sup> M ii, 99.

<sup>29</sup> T27, 871c.

<sup>30</sup> T29, 557b.

<sup>31</sup> J. Masuda, (1922), 19.

<sup>32</sup> J. Masuda, (1922), 19-20.

<sup>33</sup> T17, 753b. Masuda thinks that 'the *rūpakāya* of the Tathāgata' means the *saṃbhogakāya*, not the *nirmāṇakāya*. He probably thinks in terms of the infinite size, not the infinite number. But at this stage ideas of the *saṃbhogakāya* had not been conceived yet, while the ideas of the *nirmāṇakāya* already existed there, as Śākyamuni was considered a *nirmāṇakāya*.

<sup>34</sup> T17, 752a.

<sup>35</sup> T17, 752a-c.

<sup>36</sup> T17, 751c. *Chi* (尺) is a Chinese measurement, three *chi* are similar to one meter and ten *chi* are equal to one *zhang* (丈).

<sup>37</sup> Yao Zhihua, (1996), 163, Kuiji's commentary.

- <sup>38</sup> J. Masuda, (1922), 20.
- <sup>39</sup> Yao Zhihua, (1996), 164.
- <sup>40</sup> T17, 751c, 752b.
- <sup>41</sup> T17, 752b-753a.
- <sup>42</sup> T17, 752b.
- <sup>43</sup> This statement is found in many places, (1) The early *sūtras*: D ii, 225; iii, 114; M iii, 65; A i, 27; \**Dīrghāgama*, T1, 31a; 79a; \**Madhyamāgama*, T1, 724a. (2) Later works: *Milindapañha*, 236; *Mahāvastu*, iii, 199; *Kośa*, iii, 198-201 (Chinese translation: T29, 64c-65a); Chinese translation of the *Mahāyānasamgraha*, T31, 132b; 151c.
- <sup>44</sup> Mochizuki Shinko, 《淨土教起源及發達》 p.433ff. Cited from Nishio Kyoyu (1938), 142.
- <sup>45</sup> Nishio Kyoyu (1938), 149-155.
- <sup>46</sup> Kotatsu Fujita (1958), 70.
- <sup>47</sup> T25, 126b, 《大智度論》“以是故佛於聲聞法中，不言有十方佛，亦不言無。” The translation is mine.
- <sup>48</sup> 《大智度論》：“復次，爲聲聞說法中無大慈悲心，大乘法中一句雖少，有大慈悲；聲聞法中皆自爲身，大乘法中廣爲眾生；聲聞法中無欲廣知諸法心，但欲疾離老病死，大乘法中欲了了知一切法；聲聞法功德有限量，大乘法中欲盡諸功德，無有遺餘，如是等大小乘差別。” (T25, 619c) “復次聲聞法易解易知故言具足，菩薩法佛法難解難知故言當學。復次聲聞法總相，但知苦知苦因知苦盡知盡苦道……菩薩摩訶薩如大醫。” (T25, 235c) Sometimes the author of the MPPŚ also uses the term *śrāvaka Dharma Tripiṭaka* such as “何經中有是語？若聲聞法三藏中說，若摩訶衍中說？” (T25, 92a)
- <sup>49</sup> \**Dīrghāgama*: T1, 76c; 163b; 255b; \**Samyuktāgama*: T2, 131a; 322a; 410a; \**Ekottarāgama*: T2, 708c-710a; 773a.
- <sup>50</sup> See the latest study on this issue, Charles Willemen, Bart Dessein and Collett Cox (1998), 7-9.
- <sup>51</sup> T25, 93a-c, 126a-c.
- <sup>52</sup> T25, 93b. Lamotte's translation: “Je m'incline devant les Buddhas passés, futurs et présents; Je prends mon refuge dans le Buddha Śākyamuni.” This verse is quoted again at T25, 126a. My translation is directly rendered from the Chinese original.
- <sup>53</sup> French: Lamotte (1944), Tome i, 301-2, footnote 1. Chinese translation: Lamotte (1992), 92-94, footnote 93.
- <sup>54</sup> T21, No.1245, 《毘沙門天王經》，法天譯。
- <sup>55</sup> T23, 174b. 《十誦律》：“阿吒那劍(晉言鬼神成經)”。
- <sup>56</sup> T25, 93b. The translation is mine.
- <sup>57</sup> T17, 753b.
- <sup>58</sup> This saying of the Buddha is found in the *Āṅuttaranikāya*, v, 144: Tayo bihikkhave dhammā loke na saṃvijjeyyūṃ, na Tathāgato loke uppajjeyya araham sammāsambuddho... Katame tayo? Jāti ca jarā ca maraṇaṃ ca. It is also found in two places in the Chinese \**Samyuktāgama*, T2, 95c, 199c.
- <sup>59</sup> T25, 125c-126a.
- <sup>60</sup> T2, 243a. 譬如普天大雨洪澍，東西南北，無斷絕處，如是東方、南方、西方、北方，無量國土，劫成劫壞，如天大雨，普雨天下，無斷絕處。如是無始生死，長夜輪轉，不知苦之本際。The translation is mine.
- <sup>61</sup> T2, 488b. 天雨密緻如縛掃簞，東西南北及以四維間無空處，東方無量世界眾

生熾盛安樂，無量世界悉皆碎壞，無量世界眾生滿中，無量世界悉皆空虛，無有眾生在中居止，南西北方四維上下亦復如是，生死無始，餘如上說。The translation is mine.

<sup>62</sup> For further information on the schools of the *Āgamas* see Charles Willemen, Bart Dessein and Collett Cox (1998), 7-8.

<sup>63</sup> T17, 752a. “佛力不可當，持一指動十方佛刹。” The translation is mine.

<sup>64</sup> T17, 752b: “佛悉曉了，十方不可計諸佛所有經法。” The translation is mine.

<sup>65</sup> T17, 753b: “佛化分身無央數，不可復計佛刹悉遍至，佛身亦不增亦不減。” The translation is mine.

<sup>66</sup> T17, 753a: “諸佛合一身，以經法為身。” The translation is mine.

<sup>67</sup> The *\*Yogācārabhūmiśāstra*, T30, 499b-500b; the *\*Bodhisattvabhūmidharasūtra*, T30, 902a-b; the *Kośa*, T29, 64c-65a; the *Mahāyānasamgraha*, T31, 112a; 151b; the *\*Mahāyānasamgrahaśāstrabhāṣya*, T31, 266a-c; 319b; 378a-b; 447b-448c; the *\*Abhidharmanyāyānusārasāstra*, T29, 423b; and the *\*Mahāyānāvātārakaśāstra*, T32, 43c.

<sup>68</sup> J. Masuda (1925), 21. All Bodhisattvas are born from the right side when they come out of their mothers' womb.

<sup>69</sup> T8, 446a. The translation is mine.

<sup>70</sup> T8, 462a. The translation is mine.

<sup>71</sup> Edward Conze (1960a), 9.

<sup>72</sup> For references see É. Lamotte, “Sur la formation du Mahāyāna”, *Asiatica*, 1954, 386, n.49. Cited from Edward Conze (1960a), 9.

<sup>73</sup> Cited from Edward Conze (1960a), 9. See also J. Przyluski, *Le Concil de Rajagraha*, 304.

<sup>74</sup> N. Dutt, (1978), 215.

<sup>75</sup> *Kathāvatthu*, 62, “Thānāthānādini hi sāvakā padesena jānanti. Tathāgatā nippadesena iti. Tāni uddesato sādharmaṇāni; neddesato asādharmaṇāni...niddesato sabbākaravisayatam samdhāya paṭikkhipati.” Cf. *Mahāvastu*, i, 158.

<sup>76</sup> See S iii, 66. also N. Dutt, (1978), 103.

<sup>77</sup> The term “Hīnayāna” used in this dissertation indicates all other schools apart from Mahāyāna. Vajrayāna is also considered Mahāyāna.

<sup>78</sup> J. Masuda, (1922), 62.

<sup>79</sup> J. Masuda, (1922), 64.

<sup>80</sup> Cited from N. Dutt, (1978), 176.

<sup>81</sup> J. Masuda translates this proposition as “the average man (*prthagjana*) also possesses the potentiality of becoming a Buddha”, (1922), 68. But this may mislead the reader to think that the Sautrāntika already had the idea that all sentient beings have the potential to become Buddhas as the Mahāyānists believe.

<sup>82</sup> On the Vibhajyavādins, see Dutt, N. (1978), 208-210.

<sup>83</sup> T27, 871c.

<sup>84</sup> T27, 308c-309a. “謂或有執，不染污心亦令有相續，如分別論者。問：彼何故作此執？答：彼依契經故作此執，謂契經說，‘菩薩正知入母胎，正知住母胎，正知出母胎。’既有正知入母胎者，正知即在，不染污心故，不染污心亦令有相續。”

<sup>85</sup> T27, 410b-c. There are five hindrances: (1) sensuous lust, (2) ill-will, (3) physical and mental torpor and languor, (4) restlessness and worry and (5) doubt.

<sup>86</sup> T27, 479c. “如分別論者，彼作是說：唯一無上正等菩提，常住不滅，隨彼彼

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佛出現世間，能證者雖異，而所證無別，如一龍象，妙飾莊嚴，雖有多人次第乘御，而彼龍象前後是一。問：彼何故作此執？答彼依契經。如契經說：‘佛告苾芻，我證舊道，’故知聖道定是無爲。” The translation is mine.

<sup>87</sup> T27, 116c. “或復有執，緣起是無爲，如分別論者。問：彼因何故作如是執？答：彼因經故，謂契經說：‘如來出世若不出世，法住法性，佛自等覺，爲他開示，乃至廣說’，故知緣起是無爲法。”

## Chapter Four

### The Origin and Development of the Dharmakāya

#### 1. The Origin of the Dharmakāya

The term *dharmakāya* is mentioned in various places in the earliest strata of Buddhist literature, namely the Pāli *Nikāyas* and the Chinese *Āgamas*. The aim in this section is to collect and analyse some of the most significant passages of the *Nikāyas* and their corresponding passages in the Chinese *Āgamas*.<sup>1</sup> There are four relevant passages in which the idea of *dharmakāya* is mentioned as the teaching of the Buddha.

(1) In the first passage under discussion, the idea of treating the Buddha's teaching as teacher after his death is clearly stated. In the Pāli *Mahāparinibbānasutta*, the Buddha said to Ānanda, 'the Dhamma and Vinaya that have been preached by me will be your teacher after my death'.<sup>2</sup> The fact that the monks took refuge in the Dhamma and Vinaya after the Buddha had passed is also reflected in the *Gopaka-Moggallānasutta* of the *Majjhimanikāya*.<sup>3</sup> The Dhamma and Vinaya clearly refer to the collection of doctrines and disciplinary rules taught and established by the Buddha. A similar passage is found in all four Chinese versions of the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*, one included in the *\*Dīrghāgama* and three preserved as independent translations. The basic meaning of the passage is the same as that in the Pāli version although the terminology is different. We now examine the different versions in detail.

Firstly, the relevant passage in the *\*Dīrghāgama* reads as follows: "The Buddha said, 'Ānanda, you should not think that after the passing away of the Buddha there is no protection, no support. The Dharma and Vinaya preached by me ever since my enlightenment are your protection and support.'"<sup>4</sup>

Secondly, the passage in the *\*Buddhāparinirvāṇasūtra* is similar to the first one. The only difference being that the Buddha's address was made not to Ānanda alone, but to a group of monks. He said: "After my *parinirvāṇa*, (you all) should not say that

the Buddha is gone and there is no support. The Dharma and Vinaya are (your) support. After my *parinirvāṇa*, (you all) should learn (lit. appreciate) the Dharma and observe the Vinaya generation after generation. You should observe and transmit the two hundred and fifty rules with reverence just as one would revere one's parents."<sup>5</sup>

Thirdly, the passage in the *\*Parinirvāṇasūtra* is similar to the above one in which the Buddha addressed a group of monks: "You, all disciples, should spur yourselves and not be slackened and lazy, (thinking) that the Buddha is gone and there is no refuge. (You all) should act in accordance with the Dharma, explain the Vinaya rules every fortnight, and recite the *sūtras* on the six observance days so that your minds are set on the Dharma just as in the days when the Buddha was alive."<sup>6</sup>

Fourthly, in the *\*Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* translated by Faxian, the passage is very similar to the Pāli version. The Buddha said to Ānanda: "The *prātimokṣa* rules laid down by me for all bhikṣus and the wonderful Dharma I preached in the past will be your great teacher (when I pass away), just as I am now."<sup>7</sup>

Although the first three translations do not mention that the Dharma and Vinaya should be considered as 'teacher', similar ideas are implied about the teachings of the Buddha as being protection and support of the monks, and that they should look upon them with reverence. The idea in the fourth text is exactly the same as that in the Pāli version, which is to take the Dharma and Vinaya as teacher after the Buddha's death. In the same way as in the Pāli version, the *\*Gopaka Maudgalyāyanasūtra* of the Chinese *\*Madhyamāgama* also reflects the idea of taking refuge in the Dharma after the Buddha's death.<sup>8</sup> Thus the idea of considering the Buddha's teaching as teacher after his death as shown in the early literature in both Pāli and Chinese was common to all the early Buddhist schools. So here the Dharma is equal to the Buddha.

(2) In the second passage, the Buddha compares himself to Brahmā. The Pāli passage reads as follows: Just as a brāhmaṇa would say that he is born of Brahmā, through his mouth, so a *Sakyaputtīyasamaṇa* may say that he is the son of the Bhagava, born of his mouth, born of the Dhamma, created by the Dhamma, an heir of



the Dhamma (*dhammakāyāda*).<sup>9</sup> It is obvious that this is only to draw a parallel between a brāhmaṇa and a *Sakyaputtiyasamaṇa*, and to indicate that Dhammakāya is equated to Brahmakāya.<sup>10</sup>

Buddhaghoṣa, commenting on the word *dhammakāya* in the passage in *Dīghanikāya*, states: “Why is the Tathāgata said to have a *Dhammakāya*? Because the Tathāgata, having thought or devised in his mind the Buddha-word, which is the three *Piṭakas*, aspired to words. Therefore, that body is the Dhamma, because it is made of the Dhamma.”<sup>11</sup> So the Theravādin understanding of the term *dhammakāya* is nothing but the teachings of the Buddha.

The same passage is found in the *\*Dīrghāgama*. It is stated in the text that the Mahābrahmā is another name of the Tathāgata who is the eye of the world, the lord of the world and the Dharma is the wisdom of the world, the nectar of the world.<sup>12</sup> In the *\*Saṃyuktāgama*, similar ideas are found in two places. First, the Buddha said to the monks: “All of you are my sons, born through my mouth, born of the Dharma, the sons of my Dharma.”<sup>13</sup> Second, we find the same passage spoken by and applied to Mahākāśyapa who compared himself to the son of the Wheel Turning Monarch (*cakravartin*). The passage reads thus: “Similarly, I am the son of the Buddhadharma, born through the mouth of the Buddha, born of the Dharma, an heir of the Dharma Treasure.”<sup>14</sup>

It is difficult to establish here what Sanskrit word was used for the phrase ‘the heir of Dharma’, but it is clear that the word Dharma is used in the same sense, as it is in the Pāli *suttas*, to denote the doctrine. That the monks are the sons of the Dharma, born from the mouth of the Buddha, implies that they have gained new lives through the Dharma preached by the Buddha through his mouth. In other words, the Dharma is their mother as well as teacher.

(3) The third passage is found in the *Aṅguttaranikāya* where the Buddha said that he is neither a god, nor a gandharva, nor a man, but a Buddha.<sup>15</sup> Some scholars speculate that this is the earliest trace of the Mahāyāna *kāya* concept, but an analysis

of the passage shows that the Buddha made the statement because he had destroyed the cankers (*āsravas*) which are the cause for a living being to continue taking rebirth in *samsāra*.<sup>16</sup> The idea in the corresponding passage in the Chinese *\*Ekottarāgama* is the same.<sup>17</sup> Thus, this passage does not support any doctrinal implication beyond the concept of the Buddha as having completely destroyed the cankers.

(4) In the fourth example, a well known passage of utmost significance in our study, the Buddha declared that he is equal to the Dharma, and it is only in the Dharma that he is to be seen, not in the physical body. In the Pāli passage, the Buddha made the following statement to Vakkali, “Alas, Vakkali! What is there in seeing this vile body of mine? He who sees the Dhamma (*dhammakāyo*), Vakkali, sees me; he who sees me sees the Dhamma (*dhammakāyo*).”<sup>18</sup> However, this statement is not found in the Chinese *Āgamas*, although the story of the sick Vakkali is found in two places, one in the *\*Saṃyuktāgama* and the other in the *\*Ekottarāgama*.<sup>19</sup> In this statement, the Buddha is clearly identified with the Dharma. But after careful analysis of the context in which this statement was made, it is clear that the Buddha stressed the practice of the Dharma and its realisation rather than focusing on his physical body. The Buddha stated this since the sick Vakkali made known to him that he had longed to see the Buddha in person for a long time, but due to lack of physical strength he could not do so. There does not appear to be any doctrinal or philosophical implication in the statement of seeing the Buddha in his Dharma. Commenting on this passage, Buddhaghōṣa described the body of the Tathāgata as the supramundane dhamma in nine divisions.<sup>20</sup> It is clear that Dhamma in this context is nothing but the teaching of the Buddha as the “nine divisions” is the earliest classification of the Buddhadharma. So the Theravāda considered the *Tipiṭaka* as the Dharmakāya. However, if one considers this statement alongside other similar declarations made by the Buddha elsewhere in the canonical literature, one may find traces from which both the Mahāsāṃghikas and the Mahāyānists could draw certain conclusions concerning the concept of the Buddha.

In many places in both the Pāli *Nikāyas* and the Chinese *Āgamas*, it is stated repeatedly that the Dharma as dependent origination (*pratītyasamutpāda*) exists eternally whether a Buddha arises or not in the world.<sup>21</sup> And in the *\*Saṃyuktāgama*, it is further stated that the Buddhas are only the discoverers of this Dharma, dependent origination, but not the inventors.<sup>22</sup> In both the *\*Madhyamāgama* and the *Majjhimanikāya*, there is another well known statement that he who sees dependent origination sees the Dharma and he who sees the Dharma sees dependent origination.<sup>23</sup> Thus, when we take all the above statements into consideration, it could be inferred logically that the Buddha is eternal because dependent origination exists eternally and the Buddha is equal to it. The Buddha here is not the historical person in flesh and blood, but a philosophical concept. That is why the compilers of the *\*Prajñāpāramitāsūtras* used the word *tathāgata* instead of the word *Buddha* in their discussions of the relationship between the *Tathāgata* and *tathatā*, the actual nature of all things.

The authors/compilers of the *\*Prajñāpāramitāsūtras* probably made their claims on the Buddha's eternity on the basis of the statements discussed above. In the *Daoxingbanruojing*, the earliest *\*Prajñāpāramitāsūtra* in existence, *tathatā*, the real nature of all phenomena, is described in much the same way as dependent origination is described in the early scriptures. It exists eternally whether a Buddha arises in the world or not. The *Tathāgata* is identified with *tathatā* in the *Daoxingbanruojing*, something which will be discussed in detail in the following section. And since *tathatā* is eternal so is the *Tathāgata*. It is perhaps the ideas expressed in these passages that have led the followers of the Mahāyāna to speculate that the Dharma corresponds to the *dharmakāya*, which is the real Buddha and which exist eternally. This idea is also reflected in a legendary story concerning the Buddha's trip to Tuṣita heaven to preach the Dharma to his mother.

The *Yizujing*, a biographical *sūtra* on the Buddha, narrates that the bhikṣuṇi Utpalavarṇā was the first to greet the Buddha in person when the latter returned to the

earth from Tuṣita heaven.<sup>24</sup> In the meantime, a bhikṣu thought that it was better to meditate rather than to see the Buddha and as a result he obtained the fruit of the first stage (*srotāpanna*) when he meditated on impermanence (*anitya*), suffering (*duḥkha*), emptiness (*śūnyatā*) and the theory of no soul (*anātman*). However, the text neither mentions the name of the bhikṣu nor states that he, rather than the bhikṣuni, was the first to see the Buddha. Commenting on this story, the MPPŚ states that it was Subhūti (it is probably the author of the MPPŚ who associated Subhūti with this story), not the bhikṣuni, who was the first to see the Buddha, because Subhūti meditated on the emptiness (*śūnyatā*) of all *dharmas* and he beheld the *dharmakāya*.<sup>25</sup> This story seems to be an echo of the statement ‘seeing the Dharma is seeing the Buddha’. The important point in this story is that the emptiness (*śūnyatā*) of all *dharmas* is considered as the *dharmakāya*. Of course, the MPPŚ is a Mahāyāna text and it naturally contains Mahāyāna ideas.

In addition to the above quotations, the term *dharmakāya* occurs many times in the Chinese *Āgamas*, but these passages are not found in the Pāli *Nikāyas*. First, the term *dharmakāya* is mentioned several times in the introductory chapter of the *\*Ekottarāgama*, something most probably apocryphal and added by the compilers. The text states: “Venerable Ānanda thinks that the *dharmakāya* of the Tathāgata will not perish, but will remain forever in the world, and gods and men will attain enlightenment upon hearing it.”<sup>26</sup> Again “Śākyamuni arose in the world with an extremely short life span, but the *dharmakāya* will remain even though the body in flesh has perished. With the aim to ensure that the Dharma will not extinguish (from the world), Ānanda is requested to recite it without hesitation.”<sup>27</sup> A similar passage is again found in chapter forty-eight of the *\*Ekottarāgama*.<sup>28</sup> In all these places, the doctrinal significance of the term *dharmakāya* is explicit, denoting merely the teaching of the Buddha that will last forever.

Second, the term *dharmakāya* is mentioned once in a *sūtra* of the *\*Saṃyuktāgama*, which corresponds to the independent *\*Aśokasūtra*. The text states:

“the body of the Tathāgata is the *dharmakāya* whose nature is pure... The lamp of the Dharma will remain forever in the world eliminating the darkness of ignorance... It is only Ānanda who can remember all (the Buddha’s teachings) without forgetting anything when he hears it once only.”<sup>29</sup> This *sūtra* is clearly very late in origin since it mentions King Aśoka. But the implications of the term *dharmakāya* still remain the same, the teachings of the Buddha.

Lastly, the \**Ekottarāgama* also mentions three times ‘the fivefold *dharmakāya*’: discipline (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), wisdom (*prajñā*), liberation (*vimukti*) and the vision of knowledge and liberation (*vimukti-jñāna-darśana*).<sup>30</sup> However, these are not exclusive to the Buddha but are shared by his great disciples such as Kāśyapa and Śāriputra. The fivefold *dharmakāya* schema is late in origin, as it is not mentioned in the Pāli canon. It is strongly arguable that the Chinese \**Ekottarāgama* was revised by later compilers as some Mahāyāna elements are found in it, an issue already discussed in chapter two. The fivefold *dharmakāya* is found in only the post-canonical Pāli texts such as the *Milindapañha* and the *Visuddhimagga*.<sup>31</sup> In his *Visuddhimagga*, Buddhaghōṣa says: “That Bhagavat, who is possessed of a beautiful *rūpakāya*, adorned with thirty major and eighty minor marks of a great man, and possessed of a *dhammakāya* purified in every way and glorified by *sīla*, *samādhi*, *paññā*, *vimutti* and *vimutti-ñāṇa-dassana*, is full of splendour and virtue, incomparable and fully awakened.”<sup>32</sup> In these passages the term *dharmakāya* simply means the purified body consisting of these five *skandhas* obtained through practice.

The above analysis of the passages found in both the Pāli *Nikāyas* and the Chinese *Āgamas* shows that the term *dharmakāya* was already present in the earliest Buddhist literature. It is evident from these passages that the term *dharmakāya* conveyed the doctrine or the collective teachings of the Buddha, and it possessed no philosophical significance beyond that. The Theravāda retained this concept of the *dhammakāya* at least until the time of Buddhaghōṣa. As discussed above, vague hints on an eternal Buddha may be present in these passages. However, it is only when all

the relevant passages and statements are collated that inferences can be drawn and a conclusion reached. It must be remembered that each and every statement the Buddha made was directed at a particular person (such as the sick monk Vakkali) in accordance with a particular situation. Therefore, these statements cannot be read in isolation but only within their own contexts. Hence, it is speculative to draw any conclusion beyond the common understanding that the term *dharmakāya* used in the early Buddhist literature represents the teachings of the Buddha. As discussed in chapter two, the Sarvāstivādins were those who first related the eighteen purified *dharmas* of the Buddha to the concept of the *dharmakāya*. However, these eighteen *dharmas*, which exist individually in the *Nikāyas* and the *Āgamas*, are the purified mental *dharmas*, the attainment of the Buddha. The Mahāsāṃghikas never used the term *dharmakāya* in any of their literature available to us, but perhaps the true Buddha as discussed in chapter three can be considered as the *dharmakāya*. However, this elaboration of Buddhology is nothing more than a transcendental, omnipotent and omniscient being. It is only the early Mahāyānists who attributed philosophical and ontological referents to the concept of the *dharmakāya* through the identification of the Tathāgata with *tathatā*, the real nature of all things. Subsequently this *tathatā* became identified with the term *dharmakāya*. Since the *tathatā* is in everything and pervades everywhere in the universe, thus the *dharmakāya* becomes the cosmic body. In the following section, we concentrate on the Mahāyāna development of the concept of the *dharmakāya* as the contributions made by the early Buddhist schools have already been dealt with.

## 2. The Mahāyāna Development of the Dharmakāya Concept

The concept of the *dharmakāya* in Mahāyāna literature has greatly advanced from that of the early Buddhist schools. The Mahāyānists developed the concept of the *dharmakāya* through its identification with a number of key terms which they introduced such as *tathatā*, *tathāgatagarbha* and *buddhadhātu*. These new terms and

ideas added new dimensions to the notion of *dharmakāya*. Thus the concept of the *dharmakāya* was fundamentally changed and transformed in several different ways in Mahāyāna *sūtras* and treatises. It has acquired both ontological and soteriological meanings.

### 1. *The Identification of the Tathāgata with Tathatā*

The earliest Mahāyāna literature is perhaps the *\*Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā* (*Aṣṭa*) according to the consensus of Buddhist scholars.<sup>33</sup> There exist six versions of the *Aṣṭa*: one in Sanskrit, one in Tibetan and four in Chinese. The four Chinese translations are the *Daoxingbanruojing* translated by Lokakṣema in 178-179 CE, the *Damingdujing* translated by Zhi Qian in 222-229 CE, the *Mohebanruochaojing* translated by Dharmapriya in 382 CE, and the *\*Prajñāpāramitāsūtra* translated by Kumārajīva, in 408 CE.<sup>34</sup>

In these versions of the *Aṣṭa*, there appears a new term *tathatā* or suchness, the real nature of all things (*dharmas*) both worldly (*loka*) and transcendental (*lokottara*). The *Aṣṭa* discusses the concept of this new term in numerous places and uses many similes in order to convey its full meaning. Here we just produce a summary of it without giving details. According to the text, this real nature (*tathatā*) is in everything including the Tathāgata and remains one and the same without change at all times. The *tathatā* of the Tathāgata therefore is not different from the *tathatā* of all *dharmas*, and the *tathatā* of all *dharmas* is the same as the *tathatā* of the Tathāgata. The *tathatā* of the Tathāgata is undiscriminated and undifferentiated at all times and in all *dharmas*, because there is only one single true *tathatā* that is unmade, uncreated in all things at all times.

As shown by É. Lamotte in the introduction to his translation of the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa*, the early Mahāyānists introduced this new concept of *tathatā* on the basis of the early Buddhist teachings.<sup>35</sup> Out of the four passages he found in the early scriptures pertaining to the doctrine of the absolute, two of them are relevant to

our study.

First, the nature of things persists whether the Buddha arises or not in the world. This passage, which is also used to describe *tathatā* in the *Aṣṭa*, is found in many places in both the *Nikāyas* and the *Āgamas*.<sup>36</sup> In early Buddhism, the nature of things is identified with dependent origination upon which the Tathāgata is fully enlightened.<sup>37</sup> The *tathatā* in the *Aṣṭa* is identified with emptiness (*śūnyatā*) by the realization of which a bodhisattva is named a Tathāgata. Here dependent origination and emptiness refer to the same thing because everything is empty on account that it arises dependent on causes and conditions, and apart from causes and conditions, there is no unchanging substance, thus it is empty.

Second, there is a passage in the *Udāna* describing *nibbāna* as: “unborn (*ajāta*), unbecome (*abhūta*), unmade (*akata*), unformed (*asaṃkhata*).”<sup>38</sup> A similar description of *tathatā* is also found in the *Aṣṭa*, where *tathatā* is said to be unmade and uncreated just as discussed above. So the concept of *tathatā* in the *Aṣṭa* has the characteristics of both dependent origination and *nirvāṇa* found in early Buddhism. Early Mahāyānists may have thus developed the concept of *tathatā* by combining the ideas of dependent origination and of *nirvāṇa*, and finally identifying it with the Tathāgata.

The discussion on *tathatā* in the *Aṣṭa* is as follows. The passage in the oldest extant *Aṣṭa*, the *Daoxingbanruojing*, while problematic, can be elucidated by Kumārajīva’s explicit translation.

“Subhūti, the Tathāgata knows the characteristic of forms (*rūpa*) through perfect wisdom (*prajñāpāramitā*). How does (the Tathāgata) know the characteristic of forms? Because he knows their real nature (*tathatā*). Subhūti, the Tathāgata knows the characteristics of sensation, conceptualization, volitional predisposition and consciousness. How does (the Tathāgata) know the characteristic of consciousness? Because he knows their real nature (*tathatā*). Subhūti, the *tathatā* of the five aggregates is what the Tathāgata meant by ‘the arising and disappearing’. The *tathatā* of the five aggregates is the *tathatā* of the world; it is the *tathatā* of all things



(*sarvadharmā*). The *tathatā* of all things is the *tathatā* of the fruits of the stream-winner (*srotāpanna*), the once-returner (*sakṛdāgāmi*), the non-returner (*anāgāmi*), the worthy one (*arhat*), and the *pratyekabuddha*. The *tathatā* of the *pratyekabuddha* is the *tathatā* of the Tathāgata. All these *tathatās* are actually one without a second, without differentiation, infinite and immeasurable. Thus, Subhūti, the Tathāgata obtains the characteristic of the *tathatā* through perfect wisdom (*prajñāpāramitā*). Subhūti, perfect wisdom thus makes a display of the worlds of all Buddhas and also gives birth to all Buddhas. All Buddhas know the *tathatā* of the world and truly obtain this *tathatā*, therefore, they are named Tathāgata.”<sup>39</sup>

This identification of the Tathāgata with the concept of *tathatā* constituted the foundation for Mahāyāna Buddhology. The early Mahāyānists considered *tathatā* to be the defining principle of Buddhahood. The realisation of *tathatā* was to them enlightenment. The *Aṣṭa* discusses the characteristics of *tathatā* in ten different ways as follows.<sup>40</sup> (1) The *tathatā* of the Tathāgata has no coming and no going. (2) The *tathatā* of the Tathāgata is the *tathatā* of all *dharmas*, and vice versa. (3) The *tathatā* of the Tathāgata is eternal and has no differentiation. (4) The *tathatā* of the Tathāgata is neither existent nor non-existent. (5) There is no obstacle to the *tathatā* of the Tathāgata and to that of all *dharmas*. (6) The *tathatā* of the Tathāgata and that of all *dharmas* are one and the same, there is nothing that is not *tathatā* because it is unmade. (7) The *tathatā* of the Tathāgata is eternal and undifferentiated, and so is the *tathatā* of all *dharmas*. (8) The *tathatā* of the Tathāgata is neither apart from nor the same with all *dharmas*. (9) There is no past, present and future in the *tathatā* of the Tathāgata, and in that of all *dharmas*. (10) There is no difference between the *tathatā* of the Tathāgata and that of the past, that of the present, that of the future, and that of all *dharmas*. A Bodhisattva is named a Buddha when he has attained the highest full enlightenment by means of *tathatā*.

The *Aṣṭa* further states that all *dharmas* have emptiness (*śūnyatā*) as their characteristic, which has no mark, no creator, no destruction, no origin, no birth, and

no support. These characteristics exist eternally whether a Buddha arises or not. A Tathāgata is so named because he possesses all such characteristics.<sup>41</sup>

The concept of *tathatā* is explained as emptiness (*śūnyatā*), but not in the absolute sense that there is nothing at all. The authors of the *Aṣṭa* were in fact attempting to discard attachment to the attitude that everything exists hypothetically. The Mahāyānists were proud that they taught the emptiness of both the individual (*puḍgalanairātmya*) and of phenomena (*dharmanairātmya*), while the Hīnayānists only taught the emptiness of the former and affirmed the real existence of the latter. However, the Mahāyānists took the *tathatā* to be the real nature of all things as the absolute.

The *Aṣṭa* explains that even the Buddha is empty, comes from nowhere and goes to nowhere because all *dharmas* are empty (*śūnya*). “There is no *prajñāpāramitā*, and no one who practises *prajñāpāramitā*; no one who obtains Buddhahood; no all-knowledge (*sarvajñā*), and no one who obtains all-knowledge; no Tathāgatahood, and no one who becomes a Tathāgata; no state of being unborn, and no one who attains the state of being unborn; no ten powers, and no one who obtains the ten powers; no four kinds of intrepidity, and no one who obtains the four kinds of intrepidity. All *dharmas* are pure but no one obtains them.”<sup>42</sup> Thus, what is a Buddha? According to the early Mahāyānists, Buddha is emptiness, the true nature of all *dharmas*. Then a question would naturally be asked: how can one become a Buddha if all *dharmas* are empty like a mirage? The text explains in a long passage that one gains full enlightenment neither apart from nor without the *prajñāpāramitā*.<sup>43</sup> This is because the world including the *prajñāpāramitā* is an illusion; it arises dependently on causes and conditions and therefore, one should not become attached to it as real. But, on the other hand, without practising the *prajñāpāramitā*, one will not obtain the merits necessary for Buddhahood. So a bodhisattva should practise the *prajñāpāramitā* without even the thought of attaining enlightenment, because the difference between a Buddha and an ordinary sentient being is that the former is

without any 'thought' while the latter is full of thoughts and attachments.<sup>44</sup> Therefore, the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa* speaks of entry into non-duality. A bodhisattva is advised to think: "I will save countless sentient beings and make them attain *nirvāṇa*, but this Dharma does not lead even one single person to *nirvāṇa*. Why? Because all are in the state of *tathatā*."<sup>45</sup> However, holding fast to emptiness is also a kind of attachment to be abandoned, for reifying anything existent is attachment. Similarly, thinking that everything does not exist is also attachment. Śāriputra asked: "What is attachment?" Subhūti replied: "The thought that form is empty is attachment. The thought that feeling, apperception, volitional formation (lit: birth and death), and consciousness are empty is attachment. The thought that the past *dharmas* are past *dharmas* is attachment. The thought that the present *dharmas* are present *dharmas* is attachment. The thought that the future *dharmas* are future *dharmas* is attachment."<sup>46</sup> Thus, any activity of the mind is attachment because the mind is originally pure.<sup>47</sup> Non-activity of the mind is the mind that does not arise; it neither observes nor reflects external objects. This is called the non-attachment of the mind, which is the mind of the Buddha.<sup>48</sup> Therefore, Tathāgata, *tathatā*, and the pure mind are not different, but refer to three aspects of one and the same thing. Observing from the real nature of all *dharmas*, it is called *tathatā*; speaking from the aspect of mentality, it is the pure mind; and beholding it from the angle of bodhisattva practice, it is called Tathāgata. The *tathatā* is emptiness, but not absolute emptiness; it is emptiness unthinkable, indescribable. That is why according to the *\*Prajñāpāramitāsūtras* the Buddha did not wish to teach immediately following his enlightenment.<sup>49</sup>

The relationship between the Tathāgata and *tathatā* is clearly explained in the *Fangguangbanruojing*, the Chinese translation of the *\*Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā*.<sup>50</sup> The text states: "All Tathāgatas do not change or move, there is no coming and no going. The Tathāgata is suchness (*tathatā*) which does not arise or disappear. There is no coming and no going because there is no arising, as no-birth is the Tathāgata. Sons of good families, reality does not know the time of coming and the time of going, so

reality is the Tathāgata. Empty space does not come and does not go, so emptiness is the Tathāgata. The ultimate truth (*paramārtha*) does not come and does not go, so the ultimate truth is the Tathāgata. The unconditioned (*asaṃskṛta*) does not come and does not go, so the unconditioned is the Tathāgata. Cessation (*nirodha-samāpatti*) does not come and does not go, so cessation is the Tathāgata. Sons of good families, the Tathāgata is not apart from all these *dharmas*, which are the *tathatā* of the Tathāgata.”<sup>51</sup> Here the Tathāgata is identified with the *tathatā*, the pure and real nature of all *dharmas*. So the Tathāgata is one who has not only realized, but also become *tathatā*. In other words, the *tathatā* becomes the essence (*svabhāva*), or to use Makransky’s words, ‘the defining principles of Buddhahood’ in Mahāyāna Buddhism. Therefore, the same text states: “The Tathāgata is not to be seen from form-body (*rūpakāya*), because the Tathāgata is *dharmatā* which does not come and does not go. The Tathāgata also does not come and does not go.”<sup>52</sup> Thus, Tathāgata and *tathatā* are two names of one thing, the empty nature of all *dharmas*.

A passage identical to the above is also found in both the Sanskrit version of the *Aṣṭa* and the small \**Prajñāpāramitāsūtra* translated by Kumārajīva. However, in these two *sūtras* ‘*dharmatā*’ is replaced by ‘*dharmakāya*’. “All Tathāgatas are not to be seen from the perspective of the form-body (*rūpakāya*), because Tathāgatas are the *dharmakāya*. Sons of good families, the real nature (*tathatā*) of all *dharmas* does not come and does not go, and the same holds for the Tathāgatas.”<sup>53</sup> It is clear that the *dharmakāya*, the *dharmatā* and the *tathatā* are terms with identical meanings.

This is a significant reinterpretation of Buddhahood from early Buddhism, which provided the foundation for the entire Mahāyāna doctrine. The *tathatā*, the real nature of all things, is everywhere and pervades the entire cosmos, so the *dharmakāya* becomes the cosmic body. The *tathatā* is also named the *tathāgatagarbha* because it is the cause of Buddhahood. This *tathāgatagarbha* is called the *buddhadhātu* with regard to sentient beings, for the *tathatā* is covered with all kinds of defilements (*kleśas*), and it is called the *dharmakāya* at the stage of Buddhahood when the

defilements are removed and the real nature revealed.

## 2. *The Dharmakāya as the Cosmic Body*

In the three earliest Chinese translations of the *Aṣṭa*, the *Daoxingbanruojing*, the *Damingdujing* and the *Mohebanruochaojing*, there is no mention of the term *dharmakāya* although the authors discussed in length the notion of the *tathatā*. It is only in both the Sanskrit version and Kumārajīva's translation of the *Aṣṭa* that the term is mentioned.<sup>54</sup> This has led Lewis Lancaster to think "that the earliest ideas in Mahāyāna *sūtras* were neither the two-body nor the three-body ones, but rather the notion of one Buddha body".<sup>55</sup> Y. Kajiyama challenged this view by saying that the older version of the *Aṣṭa* had already made a distinction between the physical body of the Buddha and *tathatā*, whilst not utilizing terms such as *dharmakāya* and *rūpakāya*. He further asserts that the concepts of the *dharmakāya* and the *rūpakāya* were established around 200 CE.<sup>56</sup> Kajiyama is right in that the oldest extant *Aṣṭa*, the *Daoxingbanruojing*, uses two terms *Buddhakāya* and *Tathāgata* in the discussion of the concept of the Buddha. The term *Buddhakāya* is used in the sense of the physical body which is produced by conditions and causes. The *sūtra* uses many metaphors to illustrate that the *Buddhakāya* is empty and that the Buddha makes a display of such a body only for the sake of sentient beings. In reality, the Buddha has no form as it is not created and no one controls it.<sup>57</sup> The term *Tathāgata*, however, denotes one who realizes the *tathatā* of all *dharmas*, the empty nature of both worldly and transcendental things, as discussed above. It is only rarely that the term *Buddha* is used instead of *Tathāgata* to denote the state of Buddhahood.

The *Vimalakīrtinirdeśasūtra* translated firstly by Zhi Qian contains the term *dharmakāya*, but its exact connotations are not clear.<sup>58</sup> The text only states: "The *dharmakāya* of the *Tathāgata* is not the body made of thought and desire."<sup>59</sup> Kumārajīva's translation of the *sūtra* rendered the same sentence as "The body of all *Tathāgatas* is the *dharmakāya*, not the body made of thought and desire."<sup>60</sup> So the

true body of the Tathāgata is not the *rūpakāya* but the *dharmakāya*. The meaning of the term *dharmakāya* becomes clear in later translations of the \**Prajñāpāramitāsūtras* such as the \**Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā* (Chinese: *Fangguangbanruojing*), which was translated into Chinese by Mokṣala in 291 CE. The *sūtra* states: “Whether there is a Buddha or not, the *dharmatā* abides in the *tathatā*, and the *dharmatā* is the *dharmakāya*.”<sup>61</sup> Here the *dharmatā* is the same as *tathatā*, the empty nature of all *dharmas*, because the text says that the *dharmatā* abides in the reality of the Buddha’s all-knowing wisdom, which is emptiness.<sup>62</sup> The \**Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā* translated by Kumārajīva mentions the terms *rūpakāya* and *dharmakāya* jointly. The text explains that Buddhas are not to be seen in the *rūpakāya*, but in the *dharmakāya*.<sup>63</sup>

The concept of the *dharmakāya* became firmly established and expanded once it became identified with the concept of *tathatā*. In later Chinese translations of the Mahāyāna texts the concept of the *dharmakāya* has the characteristics of a cosmic body. This is apparent in Dharmarakṣa’s translations such as *Rulaixingxianjing*, *Dushipinjing*, *Dengmupusasuowensanmeijing*, *Jianbeiyiqiezhidejing*, and \**Mūkakumārasūtra* which were all translated into Chinese between 266 and 313 CE.<sup>64</sup> The *dharmakāya* in these *sūtras* is described as having the following characteristics. First, there is only one *dharmakāya* in all the Buddhas of the past, present and future, and this one body pervades everywhere in all the Buddha lands of the ten directions. The *Rulaixingxianjing* states: “The Buddhas of the past, future and present are equal, because the *dharmakāya* is one.”<sup>65</sup> The *Dushipinjing* also affirms: “It should be known that all Buddhas are but one *dharmakāya*.”<sup>66</sup> “The *dharmakāya* is one, there is no past, present and future, it is equal in all times.”<sup>67</sup> The *Dushipinjing* further states: “The *dharmakāya* pervades all the lands of the Buddhas of the ten directions.”<sup>68</sup> The *Rulaixingxianjing* explains that the *dharmakāya* is like empty space that does not have an actual body, so there is nothing it does not hold and there is no place it does not enter whether they have physical form or not.<sup>69</sup>

Second, since the *dharmakāya* has wisdom (*prajñā*) as its body, it cannot be seen.

It is only for the sake of sentient beings that it manifests itself in different bodies. The *Rulaixingxianjing* states: “The *dharmakāya* has wisdom as its body, but ultimately it has no characteristic (*lakṣaṇa*) at all. With one body, the wisdom manifests itself in uncountable bodies and spreads throughout the entire immeasurable cosmos (*dharmadhātu*).”<sup>70</sup> The same *sūtra* further says: “Seeing nothing is seeing the Tathāgata... Why? Because he does not have an actual body, but for the sake of sentient beings, he manifests in (different) bodies.”<sup>71</sup> The *Dushipinjing* also states: “Bodhisattvas understand the wisdom of the Buddha as one, the *dharmakāya*.”<sup>72</sup> The *Jianbeiyiqiezhidejing* confirms this idea by stating that “The *dharmakāya*, the body of holy wisdom, has the original vows of all Buddhas.”<sup>73</sup> So the *dharmakāya* is also the support and basis of the manifested bodies by which the Buddha labours for sentient beings.

Third, the *dharmakāya* is pure and eternal. The *Dushipinjing* states: “(The Tathāgata) manifests himself in many impermanent *rūpakāyas*, because gods and people become attached to the *rūpakāya*, but the *dharmakāya* is eternal.”<sup>74</sup> The *Jianbeiyiqiezhidejing* affirms: “The *dharmakāya* is pure in such a way that the words ‘go’ and ‘come’ do not apply.”<sup>75</sup> The *Dengmupusasuowensanmeijing* says: “The *dharmakāya* is originally pure.”<sup>76</sup>

The *Dushipinjing* explains that the aim of bodhisattva practice is to obtain the *dharmakāya* by merging into the body of the Tathāgata because there is only one *dharmakāya*. “The body of the bodhisattva enters everywhere and together with all Tathāgatas of the past, present and future, merges into one body... Thus the bodhisattva obtains the ultimate *dharmakāya* of immeasurable merits of the Tathāgata.”<sup>77</sup> This is because bodhisattvas and Tathāgatas of the past, present and future practise for one and the same merit by which they will finally merge into one body, the *dharmakāya*.<sup>78</sup> So the eternal and universal *dharmakāya* became the basis of the infinite world as well as the pure nature of all phenomena.

The *dharmakāya* was taken to mean the cosmic body before the time of the

composition of the \**Mahāprajñāpāramitāsāstra* at the latest. In this work, the *dharmakāya* is described as pervading the whole universe. “The *dharmakāya* pervades the empty space of the ten directions, its dimensions are infinite and limitless, and its form (*rūpa*) is marvellous and dignified with limitless rays of light and voice.”<sup>79</sup> Thus the *dharmakāya* ontologically became the principle of the universe since it is identified with the *tathatā*, the true nature of all *dharma*s.

### 3. The Development of the Dharmakāya in the Avataṃsaka

The emphasis of the \**Prajñāpāramitāsūtras* is on *śūnyatā* of everything, including the Tathāgata. As a result, the soteriological aspect of the *Dharmakāya* became less important. The \**Prajñāpāramitāsūtras* state that reading the \**Prajñāpāramitāsūtras* is more useful than worshipping the relics of the Buddha, because the *prajñāpāramitā* is the mother of all Buddhas. Hence, the \**Prajñāpāramitāsūtras* stress the intellectual aspect of Buddhism and realization through wisdom. One finds, however, that Dharmarakṣa’s translation of Mahāyāna texts enhances the soteriological aspect by saying that the Buddha is the *dharmakāya*, which is eternal and can deliver suffering sentient beings by its numerous manifestations. This soteriological aspect of the Buddha is further developed in the *Avataṃsaka*, which confirms that sentient beings can find liberation just by seeing the *dharmakāya*, encountering its light or by hearing its doctrine. The *Avataṃsaka* describes the *dharmakāya* as follows: “The king of the Dharma peacefully abides in the Dharma Mansion, the light of the *dharmakāya* illuminates all... The *dharmakāya* of the Tathāgata is equal to the *dharmadhātu* (cosmos) and manifests itself according to the inclinations of sentient beings for their specific needs. The Tathāgata, the king of the Dharma, liberates sentient beings by taming them according to the law of righteousness.”<sup>80</sup> Thus, the religious aspect of the *dharmakāya* is emphasized through its saving power.

The first of the three extant Chinese translations of the *Avataṃsaka* was



conducted by Buddhahadra in 418-420 CE, and the second by Śikṣānanda in 695-699 CE. The third consists of only a partial translation, namely the Gandhavyuha by Prajñā in 796-798 CE. We focus here mainly on Buddhahadra's translation because it is the earliest. The other two translations will be mentioned only when appropriate. Śikṣānanda's translation has five additional chapters in comparison to Buddhahadra's translation though the main body of the *sūtra* is largely the same.<sup>81</sup> Prajñā's translation corresponds primarily to the last chapter of the first two, whilst revised and vastly enlarged.<sup>82</sup>

It is a well-known fact that almost all the Mahāyāna *sūtras* were subject to additions and growth and the *Avataṃsaka* is no exception. According to modern scholarship, the *Rulaixingxianjing*, the *Dushipinjing*, and the *Jianbeiyiqiezhidajing* translated by Dharmarakṣa as mentioned above are the forerunners of the *Avataṃsaka*.<sup>83</sup> They correspond to chapters thirty-two, thirty-three, and twenty-two of Buddhahadra's translation respectively. The *Dengmupusasuowensanmeijing*, also translated by Dharmarakṣa, corresponds to chapter twenty-seven of Śikṣānanda's translation which is not found in Buddhahadra's translation. On the basis of Dharmarakṣa's translations, the concept of the *dharmakāya* has been further developed in the *Avataṃsaka* in the following three ways.

First, the *dharmakāya* is the non-dual reality, the impersonal principle of the universe and ontologically the basis and support of everything. This notion is developed on the basis of the idea that there is only one *dharmakāya*. The *Avataṃsaka* states: "There is no dharma in reality. Supreme enlightenment is equal to an illusion and it is named *bodhi* because it does not have the characteristic of bringing together causes and conditions. The present Buddha is not a result or product of causes and conditions, the Buddhas of past and future are also the same. All *dharmas* without marks (of bringing together) are the real nature of all Buddhas. If one can thus observe the profound meaning of all *dharmas*, one can see all the Buddhas as well as the true characteristic of *dharmakāya*."<sup>84</sup> Śikṣānanda's translation of the *Avataṃsaka* further

states: "If one knows the real as real, the unreal as unreal, then one is a Buddha. As the Dharma of the Buddha cannot be known, the realization of this is enlightenment. All Buddhas practise in such a way, but no Dharma can be obtained. It should be known that one is many, and many are in fact one (one is reality and many are appearances of that reality). All *dharmas* do not depend on anything and they arise only when the causes and conditions are brought together. There is no doer and no deed as *dharmas* arise only from actions (*karma*) and thoughts. Then how is it known? It is because there is nothing apart from conditions. All *dharmas* do not exist because a fixed course is not to be obtained. All Buddhas abide thus without moving or changing."<sup>85</sup>

Thus with every *dharma* being reduced to *dharmakāya*, one also finds this equated with the *tathatā*, the real nature of all *dharmas* that does not differentiate, does not think and does not move. Ontologically speaking, the *dharmakāya* is the principle of the universe, and it has no characteristic of bringing together causes and conditions, as it neither arises nor disappears. All phenomena arise due to causes and conditions and therefore, they are not real, but illusions. The only reality is the non-dual *dharmakāya*. All Buddhas, bodhisattvas, worldly and transcendental *dharmas* are in reality the same because they all have the *dharmakāya* as their real nature. But from the phenomenal point of view, they are different. Just as the *Avatamsaka* says: "Mañjuśrī, the Dharma is always thus, the King of the Dharma has only one *dharma*, and all liberated people go out of *saṃsāra* along one path. The bodies of all Buddhas are but one *dharmakāya*, one mind and one wisdom, so are the powers and the fearlessness."<sup>86</sup> The *dharmakāya* abides neither in reality nor in *nirvāṇa*, and manifests in any way to purify the world.

Second, the *dharmakāya* possesses skilful means (*upāyakaśalyā*) and immeasurable rays of light through which it liberates sentient beings. By the power of skilful means, the Buddha can manifest himself to liberate sentient beings in accordance with their wishes and inclinations. Śikṣānanda's translation of the

\**Avataṃsaka* states: “With various kinds of methods the Buddhas can manifest themselves in the worlds in as many ways as the (particles of) water in the ocean according to the wishes of sentient beings. This is the skilful means of the Tathāgata. The *dharmakāya* of the Buddhas is inconceivable and it has no form, no shape and not even the shadow of images, but it can manifest itself in various forms for the many different kinds of sentient beings, allowing them to behold it in accordance with their mentality and wishes.”<sup>87</sup> The text further explains that the *dharmakāya* surpasses all *śrāvakas* and *pratyekabuddhas* in virtues, and it can manifest in different life spans, but its own lifespan neither increases nor decreases. It may be reflected in the pure minds of all sentient beings, but the *dharmakāya* itself does not make distinctions as it possesses no thought.<sup>88</sup> The *dharmakāya*, though an impersonal principle lacking movement, change, thought, and even action, can manifest itself in different bodies and forms to save sentient beings. This idea is repeatedly expressed throughout the \**Avataṃsaka*.

The rays of the *dharmakāya* are immeasurable in that they benefit all sentient beings without any discrimination just like the light of the sun. The rays first illuminate bodhisattvas, *pratyekabuddhas*, *śrāvakas*, those who have good roots, and finally all other sentient beings, in that respective order. Even those who do not have faith in the Buddha can benefit from the light of the *dharmakāya*, just as the blind are also benefited by the light of the sun.<sup>89</sup> This light is none other than the light of wisdom of the Buddha. The *sūtra* states: “Although blind people do not see the sunlight of the wisdom of the Tathāgata, yet they are benefited by it.”<sup>90</sup> “The Tathāgata possesses the light of wisdom of the ratnakāya. Sentient beings will obtain the same colour as that of the Buddha’s body if they come in contact with this light. Those who see this light will have the pure dharma eye. Those who encounter this light will eliminate all suffering and obtain dignity, wealth, happiness and even ultimate enlightenment.”<sup>91</sup> Thus the Tathāgata is almost described as an omnipotent and almighty godhead, whilst lacking the power to create the world and sentient

beings. This concept of the Buddha served as precedent for the emergence of the *saṃbhogakāya*.

Third, the *dharmakāya* is the treasure house that contains all the virtues and wisdom of the Buddha. The *Avataṃsaka* states: “The *dharmakāya* of the Tathāgata is also the same, it is the treasure house of the great wisdom and immeasurable virtues of the great treasure king.”<sup>92</sup> This is because the *dharmakāya*, although it is quiescent, produces all *dharmas*.<sup>93</sup> The attainment of all Buddhas of past, present and future and of the ten directions as well as all the practices of all bodhisattvas are manifested in the body of the Tathāgata, but the *dharmakāya* does not become differentiated.<sup>94</sup> Therefore, the *Avataṃsaka* states: “The thoughts of the mind, though as numerous as the atoms in a dust heap, are countable; the water in the ocean can be exhausted by drinking; the empty space is measurable and the wind can be caught, but the virtues of the Buddha cannot be measured.”<sup>95</sup> Thus, the development of the concept of the *dharmakāya* in the *Avataṃsaka* prepared the doctrinal foundation for the concept of the Buddha in Mahāyāna Buddhism.

#### 4. The *Dharmakāya* Bodhisattvas

There are two kinds of bodhisattvas according to the MPPŚ: the *dharmakāya* bodhisattva and the *rūpakāya* bodhisattva.<sup>96</sup> The *dharmakāya* bodhisattvas come either from Tuṣita heaven or other *Buddhakṣetras* to this world to save sentient beings while the *rūpakāya* bodhisattvas come from human beings.<sup>97</sup> The *dharmakāya* bodhisattvas have eliminated all *kleśas* and obtained the six psychic powers and can manifest themselves in many different bodies and make offerings to all Buddhas of the ten directions.<sup>98</sup> Although the *rūpakāya* bodhisattvas have not eliminated the *kleśas*, some of them have obtained five psychic powers, and others six.<sup>99</sup>

According to the *Avataṃsaka* translated by Prajñā, bodhisattvas acquire the *dharmakāya* when they have completed the practice of the ten *dharmas* in the ten stages (*bhūmi*) of training. In the first stage, the bodhisattva obtains the body of

equality because he has realized the real nature of all *dharmas*, the body which is equal and is free from wrong views. In the second stage, the bodhisattva obtains the body of purity because he is free from any transgression of the precepts, thus maintaining constant purity. In the third stage, the bodhisattva obtains the infinite body as he is free from all bad *dharmas* such as desire, hatred, ignorance, and jealousy and abides in the supreme *samādhi*. In the fourth stage, the bodhisattva obtains the body of accumulation and cultivation since he always cultivates the *bodhyaṅgas* of all Buddhas. In the fifth stage, the bodhisattva obtains the body of *dharmatā* as he has realized all truths and the nature of all *dharmas*. In the sixth stage, the bodhisattva obtains the body without applied (*vitarka*) and discursive (*vicāra*) thoughts since he has realized dependent origination (*pratītyasamutpāda*) which, although difficult to explain, is a state free from *vitarka* and *vicāra*. In the seventh stage, the bodhisattva obtains the inconceivable body because he has the skilful means of all Buddhas since he has completed the practice of wisdom. In the eighth stage, the bodhisattva obtains the body of tranquillity since no *kleśa* manifests itself in him and he is free from all worldly matters. In the ninth stage, the bodhisattva obtains the body of emptiness in that the characteristics of the body are limitless and it spreads everywhere. In the tenth stage, the bodhisattva obtains the body of wonderful wisdom as he has gained all-knowledge and a splendid realm. It is at this stage that the bodhisattva obtains the *dharmakāya*. So here the *dharmakāya* bodhisattva is a bodhisattva of the tenth stage.

Then what is the difference between the *dharmakāya* of the Buddha and that of the bodhisattva? The *Avataṃsaka* says that there is no difference with regard to the nature of the *dharmakāya*, because the *dharmatā* is equal in both ordinary and extraordinary individuals. But the merits and the powers are different. In the case of the Buddha they are complete and full while in the case of the bodhisattva they are not.<sup>100</sup> However, the power of the *dharmakāya* bodhisattvas is similar to that of the Buddha and they can manifest themselves in numerous *nirmāṇakāyas* to save sentient beings. They may even appear in the form of the Buddha with all the marks of a great

man.<sup>101</sup>

### 5. The Dharmakāya as Tathāgatarbha

As *tathatā*, real nature, exists in all *dharmas*, so it exists in every sentient being. The *tathatā* is identified as the Tathāgata in the \**Prajñāpāramitāsūtras* and is again identified with the *dharmakāya* in later *sūtras* such as the *Avatamsaka*, because the Tathāgata is the *dharmakāya*. Thus, the *dharmakāya* exists in every sentient being, but since it is covered with *kleśas*, it does not become manifest. It is on the basis of such ideas that it is declared in the \**Mahāvaiṣṭyātathāgatarbhasūtra* that all sentient beings have Buddha nature (*tathāgatarbha*).<sup>102</sup>

“With my Buddha eyes, I (the Buddha) can see that within the *kleśas* such as greed, hatred and ignorance of all sentient beings, there exists Tathāgata wisdom, Tathāgata eyes, and Tathāgata body, sitting cross-legged without moving. Sons of good families, although sentient beings with defiled bodies are in *saṃsāra*, they all have the pure *tathāgatarbha*, which is endowed with all the virtues and characteristics that I have... Thus, sons of good families, upon seeing the *tathāgatarbha* in all sentient beings, the Buddha preaches this *sūtra* in order to eliminate the *kleśas* and to reveal the *buddhadhātu*. Sons of good families, the Dharma of all Buddhas is thus: whether a Buddha arises or not in the world, the *tathāgatarbha* in all sentient beings exists eternally and without change, but it is covered with defilements. The Tathāgata arises in the world and preaches the Dharma in order to eradicate defilements and purify supreme wisdom.”<sup>103</sup>

The \**Mahāvaiṣṭyātathāgatarbhasūtra* is a very important source on the concept of the *tathāgatarbha* and it uses nine similes to explain the concept. The text states clearly that the *tathāgatarbha* is the same as the *tathatā* and the *dharmakāya*, because they all exist eternally without change whether the Buddha arises or not in the world. It is called the *dharmakāya* at the stage of Buddhahood because pure nature is revealed, and it is called *tathāgatarbha* or *buddhadhātu* at

the stage of sentient beings because the same pure nature is covered with defilements. The \**Srīmālādevīsīṃhanādasūtra* states: “This *dharmakāya* of the Tathāgata in the store of defilement is referred to as *tathāgatagarbha*.”<sup>104</sup> The \**Ratnagoṭravibhāgaśāstra* further explains that the *dharmakāya* of the Tathāgata is in the body of every sentient being. The Tathāgata and the *tathatā* are not different and all sentient beings have the same *tathatā*, which is *buddhadhātu*.<sup>105</sup> The underlying idea is *tathatā*, the real nature of all *dharmas* that links the Tathāgata and sentient beings. The *Buzengbujianjing* states: “The ultimate truth (*paramārtha*) is the realm of sentient beings, the realm of the sentient beings is the *tathāgatagarbha*, the *tathāgatagarbha* is the *dharmakāya*.”<sup>106</sup> The text continues: “Śāriputra, this same *dharmakāya*, which is covered with immeasurable *kleśas* and flows in *saṃsāra* (literally, world) from time immemorial and drifts in the ocean of birth and death for as many *kalpas* as the sands in the Ganges River, corresponds to sentient beings. Śāriputra, this same *dharmakāya* that is disgusted by the world, which is full of suffering and birth and death, abandons all desires, performs the ten perfections with eighty-four thousand methods of practice and cultivates *bodhi*, is named bodhisattva.”<sup>107</sup> Thus the text concludes: “Within the realm of sentient beings there is the *dharmakāya*, and within the realm of the *dharmakāya* there are the sentient beings. The realm of sentient beings is the *dharmakāya*, and the *dharmakāya* is the realm of sentient beings. Śāriputra, these two are the same, only the names are different.”<sup>108</sup> So Buddhas and sentient beings are not different in reality, because they have the same *dharmakāya*, but a Buddha is a person who has realized the *dharmakāya* through bodhisattva practices while a sentient being is one who does not recognize the possession of this treasure.

#### 6. The *Dharmakāya* as *Mahāparinirvāṇa*

Like the Hīnayāna *Mahāparinibbānasutta*, the Mahāyānists also have their own version of this *sūtra*, which is named by scholars as the Mahāyāna *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* (MMPS) to distinguish it from the former. One of the main

themes of the MMPS is that the Buddha is eternal, a theme very much in contrast with the Hīnayāna idea that the Buddha has departed forever after his final *nirvāṇa*.<sup>109</sup> The Mahāyānists assert the eternity of the Buddha in two ways in the MMPS. They state that the Buddha is the *dharmakāya*, and hence eternal. Next, they reinterpret the liberation of the Buddha as *mahāparinirvāṇa* possessing four attributes: eternity, happiness, self and purity. In other words, the fact that the Buddha abides in the *mahāparinirvāṇa* does not mean he has departed forever, but that he perpetually abides in intrinsic quiescence, according to the Mahāyānists. The Buddha abiding in intrinsic quiescence is none other than the *dharmakāya*. As a result, the Mahāyānists come to identify the *mahāparinirvāṇa* with the *dharmakāya*. There are two ways in which the Mahāyānists declare the eternity of the Buddha.

First, on the basis of the teachings in the early Mahāyāna *sūtras* such as the *Avataṃsaka*, the authors of the MMPS make the assertion that the Tathāgata corresponds to the *dharmakāya*. They draw their ideas from five Mahāyāna *sūtras* to which they refer to explicitly: the \**Mahāprajñāpāramitā*, the \**Saddharmapuṇḍarīka*, the \**Śūraṃgamasamādhi*, the \**Avataṃsaka*, and the \**Tathāgatagarbha*.<sup>110</sup> Amongst the five, the \**Avataṃsaka* explicitly states: “All Buddha bodies are but one *dharmakāya*.”<sup>111</sup> This *dharmakāya* is the real Buddha. It is on this doctrinal foundation that the MMPS declares: “I (the Buddha) said in a *sūtra* that the Tathāgata has two bodies: the *rūpakāya* and the *dharmakāya*. The *rūpakāya* is the transformation body manifested by skilful means and this body can be said to have birth, old age, sickness and death... The *dharmakāya* has (the attributes of) eternity (*nitya*), happiness (*sukha*), self (*ātman*) and purity (*śubha*) and is perpetually free from birth, old age, sickness, death and all other sufferings... It exists eternally without change whether the Buddha arises or not in the world.”<sup>112</sup> In the chapter on the Diamond Body, the MMPS explicitly states: “The body of the Tathāgata is not a defiled body sustained by food (*rūpakāya*), but the eternal body, the indestructible body, the diamond body, the *dharmakāya*.”<sup>113</sup> So Buddhahood is nothing but the



*dharmakāya*, and the *rūpakāya* is only considered as a function or skilful means of the *dharmakāya* to work toward the liberation of sentient beings.

Second, the Mahāyānists reinterpret the concept of *nirvāṇa* and distinguish the Buddha's *nirvāṇa* from the *nirvāṇa* attained by *śrāvakas* and *pratyekabuddhas*. To the Mahāyānists, the *mahāparinirvāṇa* possesses the four attributes of eternity (*nitya*), happiness (*sukha*), self (*ātman*) and purity (*śubha*). The MMPS states: "happiness can be obtained through the elimination of defilements (*saṃyojana*) from the stage of the first *dhyāna* to the stage of neither perception nor non-perception. This happiness can be named *nirvāṇa*, but not *mahāparinirvāṇa*. Why? The *kleśas* may rise again as the habitual force remains. What are the *kleśas* and the habitual force? *Śrāvakas* and *pratyekabuddhas* have them, such as (the thoughts of) 'my body', 'my cloth', 'I go', 'I come', 'I speak', and 'I listen'. They (*śrāvakas* and *pratyekabuddhas*) also think that 'all Tathāgatas attained *nirvāṇa*, the nature of which is without self and happiness, but only eternity and purity.' These are the *kleśas* and the habitual force... Thus, the attainment of the people of the two vehicles (*śrāvakas* and *pratyekabuddhas*) is not the *mahāparinirvāṇa*. Why? Because it does not have (the four attributes of) eternity, happiness, self and purity, after which the *mahāparinirvāṇa* is named."<sup>114</sup>

This discussion shows that the Mahāyānists distinguished the liberation of the *śrāvakas* and *pratyekabuddhas* from that of the Buddhas. It is only the Buddhas who have attained the *mahāparinirvāṇa*, and in fact, the Tathāgatas are always in the state of *mahāparinirvāṇa*, because the *dharmakāya* is intrinsically quiescent. In the chapter on the Noble Bodhisattva of the Merit King who Illuminates All, the MMPS further expounds the concept of the *mahāparinirvāṇa* by way of 'great eternity', 'great happiness', 'great self', and 'great purity'. The above chapter explains the latter three attributes while that of 'great eternity' is omitted.<sup>115</sup> The attribute of 'great eternity' may have been omitted during transmission or the authors of the MMPS may have thought that it had already been discussed in many places in the *sūtra*.

The concept of great happiness (*mahāsukha*) is explained as having the following

four meanings. (1) The nature of *nirvāṇa* is beyond suffering and happiness, because the happiness of the Buddha is eternal and without change. (2) It is complete quiescence free from all activities and noises. (3) It is omniscience (*sarvajñā*). (4) The body of the Tathāgata is not the body of *kleśas*, but the indestructible *vajra* body. The *mahāparinirvāṇa* is great happiness possessing these four meanings.

The second concept of 'great self' (*mahā-ātman*) is problematic granted the Buddhist insistence on non-self. The MMPS expounds the great self as great mastery. The *mahāparinirvāṇa* has the attribute of the great self because the Tathāgata has eight masteries. (1) The Tathāgata can manifest in numerous bodies in uncountable worlds in the universe. (2) The Tathāgata can pervade the entire universe with one body as small as a particle of dust while it does not occupy any space since there is no obstruction. (3) The Tathāgata can go anywhere in the universe without any obstacle. (4) The Tathāgata can save countless sentient beings and can manifest himself in numerous other Buddha lands although he always abides in one Buddha field. (5) The Tathāgata has the mastery of the six sense organs so that he can use any organ to perceive any of the six sense objects. (6) The Tathāgata penetrates all *dharmas*, but has no thought. (7) The Tathāgata has mastery of speech so that he can expound the meaning of one stanza for many *kalpas*. (8) The Tathāgata is like the empty space that pervades everywhere. The nature of space cannot be seen, and so is the Tathāgata, he only makes himself seen through his ability. This mastery of the Buddha is the great self, which is the *mahāparinirvāṇa*.

Third, the concept of great purity (*mahāśubha*) also has four meanings. (1) *Nirvāṇa* is the state where the twenty-five kinds of existence are extinguished.<sup>116</sup> (2) The *karma* of all Buddhas is pure. (3) The body of the Tathāgata is pure owing to the fact that it is eternal. (4) The mind of the Tathāgata is pure since it is free from all *kleśas*. *Mahāparinirvāṇa* is here great purity on account of these four meanings.<sup>117</sup>

The relationship of the four attributes of the *mahāparinirvāṇa* is explained in the *sūtra* in the following words: "The extinction of the six consciousnesses, which are

produced by (the contact of) the internal and external entrances or locations (*ayatana*), is called the eternity. This eternity is again named the self (*ātman*). The eternity and the self are together termed happiness. Then eternity, self, and happiness are called purity. Sons of good families, sentient beings are disgusted with suffering and try to eliminate the cause of this suffering. It is called the self when they are liberated from suffering. It is on account of this that I declare eternity, happiness, self and purity.”<sup>118</sup> Thus, amongst these four attributes of the *mahāparinirvāṇa*, eternity is the core by which the other three are established. Here happiness is not in the ordinary sense of enjoyment or excitement, but in the sense of abiding peacefully and eternally without any activity. Self is described not in the sense of an eternal soul but in the sense of eternal mastery over oneself so that one can manifest oneself in whatever form one wishes through skilful means with the aim of liberating sentient beings. Purity is described in the sense that all defilement has been eternally eliminated so that there is no *karma* being accumulated for rebirth in *saṃsāra*. In other words, the Tathāgata’s abiding in *mahāparinirvāṇa* means that he abides in eternity that is one of the three main themes of the MMPS.

The *dharmakāya*, according to the MMPS, also has the same four attributes as the *mahāparinirvāṇa*. It is stated in the *sūtra*: “The body of the Tathāgata is like diamond and is infinite, it has (the four attributes of) eternity, happiness, purity and self. The mind and the body (of the Tathāgata) are without obstacle because he has the eight kinds of mastery.”<sup>119</sup> “The eternity of the Tathāgata is called self. The *dharmakāya* of the Tathāgata, which has no limit, no obstacle, no birth and no extinction but has the eight kinds of mastery, is also called the self.”<sup>120</sup> “The *dharmakāya* is eternity, happiness, self and purity.”<sup>121</sup> So the *dharmakāya* and the *mahāparinirvāṇa* are identical, because they have the same attributes and qualities. They refer to two aspects of one Buddhahood, the *dharmakāya* is the eternal principle, the fruit of Buddhahood, while the *mahāparinirvāṇa* is the state which is free from all *kleśas*, the aspect of tranquillity of Buddhahood. One may thus conclude that the

Mahāyānistis reinterpreted the concept of *nirvāṇa* so that it has become identified with the *dharmakāya*. The \**Srīmālādevīsīṃhanādasūtra* states: “Supreme enlightenment (*amuttara-saṃyāk-saṃbodhi*) is the realm of *nirvāṇa* and the realm of *nirvāṇa* is the *dharmakāya* of the Tathāgata.”<sup>122</sup> So the Mahāyānistis considered that supreme enlightenment, *nirvāṇa* and *dharmakāya* are the same because they consist of the three dimensions of Buddhahood. In such context the Buddha’s entry into *nirvāṇa* does not mean that he had gone forever, but was merely abiding eternally in the state of quiescence. This state can be named *mahāparinirvāṇa* as well as *dharmakāya*, as they both have *tathatā* as their essence and are the same in nature.

In the chapter on the life span of the Buddha, the MMPS explains the concept of *nirvāṇa* in a very special way. It is said that the concept of *nirvāṇa* consists of three dimensions: *dharmakāya*, *vimokṣa* (liberation), and *mahāprajñā* (great wisdom). The relationship of the three is like the word YI .∴ (伊 in Chinese) so that independently, none of them can be called *nirvāṇa*. The Tathāgata abides in all three, and for the sake of sentient beings it is called *nirvāṇa*. It is stated in the MMPS: “What is the secret of the *garbha*? It is like the three dots of the word ‘YI’. It cannot be the word YI if the three dots are in a horizontal line and similarly it cannot be the word YI if the three dots are in a vertical line... I (the Buddha) am also the same. The *vimokṣa* alone is not *nirvāṇa*; the body of the Tathāgata alone is also not *nirvāṇa*; the *mahāprajñā* alone is also not *nirvāṇa*; that all three *dharmas* are different is also not *nirvāṇa*. I abide peacefully in all three, but for the sake of sentient beings it is named *nirvāṇa*.”<sup>123</sup>

Thus, the *mahāparinirvāṇa* has three dimensions: *dharmakāya*, *mahāprajñā* and *vimokṣa*. *Mahāprajñā* is great wisdom, the essence of the Buddhahood; the *dharmakāya* is the fruit of Buddhahood; and *vimokṣa* is liberation resulting from the severance of the *kleśas* through wisdom.

The development of the concept of the *dharmakāya* has finally reached the stage where the *dharmakāya*, the Tathāgata, *paramārtha* and *nirvāṇa* become one and the same thing because they are in fact different names given to *tathatā*. In his

\**Buddhagotraśāstra*, Vasubandhu states: “(1) It is because the Buddha and the Dharma are not separated that the *dharmakāya* is established. (2) It is owing to the fact that the nature (of all *dharmas*) in everything is *tathatā* that the Tathāgata is established. (3) It is by virtue of being free from illusions and confusions that *paramārtha* is established. (4) It is by reason of its intrinsic quiescence that *nirvāṇa* is established. These four meanings and four names are not different from the nature of the Tathāgata.”<sup>124</sup> Vasubandhu further explains that these four names are established for the sake of four kinds of people. It is for the sake of the ordinary people that the *tathatā* is named the *dharmakāya*, for those individuals are seen as holding a wrong view of the Buddha body. The *tathatā* is named the Tathāgata because confused beings of the two vehicles, the *śrāvaka* and the *pratyekabuddha*, practised the thought of impermanence while the Tathāgata is eternal. The *tathatā* is named *paramārtha* because some people hold the view that the *tathāgatagarbha* is in existence while others think it is empty, but the *tathatā* is neither in existence nor in non-existence. Lastly, *tathatā* is named *nirvāṇa* for the sake of the bodhisattvas at the tenth stage, because only the Buddha attains and becomes the *nirvāṇa*, not the bodhisattvas.<sup>125</sup>

### 7. The *Dharmakāya* as Non-duality

*Tathatā*, the real nature of all *dharmas*, is neither existent nor non-existent as discussed above. Since the *tathatā* is identified with the *dharmakāya*, the latter is also neither existent nor non-existent. It is stated in the \**Avataṃsaka* that the *dharmakāya* is neither reality nor illusion; neither past nor future; neither existence nor non-existence; neither skill-in-means nor non-skill-in-means, but it is pure, equal, unconditioned, and indestructible.<sup>126</sup> The \**Avataṃsaka* further explains why the *dharmakāya* is non-dual. The *dharmakāya* is not past because all kinds of worldly existences are eliminated, it is not future, because it does not arise, it is not present, because it does not have a physical body. It does not become extinct, since it does not have the mark of birth. It is not a reality for it is like an illusion, and it is also not an

illusion since it benefits all sentient beings by manifesting itself in the world. It does not go anywhere as it transcends birth and death, and it is not to be destroyed since the *dharmatā* does not change. It has one characteristic for it is free from words of expression, and it has no characteristic, as it is empty.<sup>127</sup> Then what is the *dharmakāya* since it does not have any of these qualities? The *\*Avataṃsaka* uses the following similes to illustrate the *dharmakāya*. “It is an infinite body, a body with all illusions being eradicated like lightning, a body like a mirage in a dream, a body like an image in a mirror, a body like the pure sun.”<sup>128</sup>

The *dharmakāya* is also the non-duality of unity and differentiation. It is not differentiated, since the *tathatā* is one and the same in everything, and is the support of all Buddhas. It is also not a unity, because many bodhisattvas will become Buddhas through the practice of the six perfections. Thus, it can be summed up in the following sentence: the *dharmakāya* is non-duality of existence and non-existence, of unity and differentiation. However, the *Avataṃsaka* still maintains that the *dharmakāya* is an unconditioned (*asaṃskṛta*) dharma.

This issue is taken up and discussed again in the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra* where the *dharmakāya* is identified with the *buddhadhātu*. The bodhisattva Mahāmati asked: “Is the *dharmakāya* created or uncreated, cause or effect, seer or that to be seen, speaker or that to be spoken of, wisdom or that to be realized by wisdom? With regard to these words, is the *dharmakāya* of the Tathāgata different or not different?”<sup>129</sup>

The *Laṅkāvatārasūtra* explains this point in detail in the chapter on the *dharmakāya* and it further develops the concept of non-duality.<sup>130</sup> The Buddha said: “Mahāmati, the characteristics of the *dharmakāya* of the Tathāgata, the fully Enlightened One, are described as neither created nor uncreated, neither cause nor effect. Why? Because it is wrong either way. Mahāmati, if the Tathāgata is created, then he is impermanent; if impermanent, all created *dharmas* are the Tathāgata, but the Buddha Tathāgata, the fully Enlightened One, is of no such *dharmas*. Mahāmati, if the *dharmakāya* of the Tathāgata is uncreated, then it is no body, so it is wrong to say

that there are immeasurable merits generated by all kinds of (bodhisattva) practices and actions. Mahāmati, if it is not created, it is like the horn of a hare or the daughter of a barren woman, because there is no cause for creation and no (physical) body. Mahāmati, if a *dharmā* is neither cause nor effect, neither in existence nor in non-existence, then that *dharmā* is free from these four kinds of characteristics. Mahāmati, those four kinds of *dharma*s are worldly expressions and sayings. Mahāmati, if a *dharmā* is free from these four kinds of *dharma*s, that *dharmā* exists but only in name, like the daughter of a barren woman. Mahāmati, the daughter of a barren woman etc. exists only in name and words, just as the discussion of the four kinds of *dharma*s, but the wise would not hold on to it if it falls into the description of the four *dharma*s. Thus, the wise should know (the answers to) all the questions concerning the Tathāgata.”<sup>131</sup> Thus, the *dharmakāya* cannot be described in words such as created or uncreated, cause or effect, because it is non-dual. Here the *dharmakāya* is also non-duality of the conditioned and the unconditioned, because it is neither the created nor the uncreated.

The *Laṅkāvatārasūtra* continues by saying that the *dharmakāya* is neither the same as nor different from the five *skandhas*, *vimukti* and *nirvāṇa*.<sup>132</sup> We have already discussed in the previous section the relationship between the *dharmakāya*, *vimukti* and *nirvāṇa*, that they are three aspects of one Buddhahood. The five *skandhas* constitute a sentient being, so the *dharmakāya* is neither the same as nor different from sentient beings. This is clearly based on the idea that all sentient beings have *buddhadhātu*. The text further expounds that if a *dharmā* exists only in name, then it neither arises nor disappears, like empty space, and it surpasses all words which conceal and cover reality (*prapañca*).<sup>133</sup> That is the characteristic of the *dharmakāya*.<sup>134</sup> Hence, the *dharmakāya* is free from all discriminations (*vikalpa*) and is in fact inconceivable. Therefore, the *sūtra* states that the *dharmakāya* is not absolutely nothing, but a mind-made body (*manomayakāya*) which cannot be understood by *śrāvakas* and *pratyekabuddhas*, and not even by the bodhisattvas in the

seventh stage.<sup>135</sup> Thus, the non-duality of the *dharmakāya* means that it cannot be conceived by our human minds and expressed in human words because it is beyond logic, reasoning, and human imagination.

#### 8. *The Dharmakāya as the Transformation of Support*

In the early Mahāyāna *sūtras*, as discussed above, Buddhahood is the *dharmakāya*, which has two meanings. First, the *dharmakāya* is non-dual ontological reality, the universal suchness that is the essence of Buddhahood, and second, it has the soteriological power to liberate sentient beings. It is on this basis that the Yogācārins have further developed the concept of the *dharmakāya*, first as the transformation of support and then they established the three bodies. Concerning the three bodies, the Yogācāra masters divided the soteriological function of the *dharmakāya* into two. One function serves to bring bodhisattvas to maturity, which is named *saṃbhogakāya*. The other function serves to bring to maturity *śrāvakas* as well as bodhisattvas in their initial stage of liberation and this is named *nirmāṇakāya*. The historical and doctrinal reasons behind the development of the *trikāya* theory will be examined in the next chapter when the origin of the *saṃbhogakāya* will be studied in depth. We will concentrate here on how the *dharmakāya* is expounded by the Yogācāra school.

The *\*Saṃdhinirmocanasūtra* is perhaps the first Yogācāra text to explain that the *dharmakāya* is the transformation of support, because the *\*Yogācārabhūmiśāstra* quotes many a time from the former when it discusses the concept of the *dharmakāya*. It is stated in the *sūtra*: “The wonderful *dharmakāya* is obtained through the transformation of support (*āśrayaparāvṛtti*) upon completion of the practice of the ten stages (*bhūmi*) and the *pāramitās*... This *dharmakāya* has two inconceivable characteristics, they are (1) freedom from the words which cover and conceal the truth (*prapañca*) and (2) freedom from the characteristics of the conditioned (*saṃskṛta*).”<sup>136</sup> The *sūtra* further explains that while *śrāvakas* and *pratyekabuddhas* also have the



transformation of support, by which they obtain the body of liberation (*vimuktikāya*), they do not have the *dharmakāya*, because they do not have the immeasurable merits of the Buddha. However, as far as liberation (*vimukti*) is concerned, Buddhas, *śrāvakas* and *pratyekabuddhas* are equal.

It is further stated in the \**Samūhinirmocanasūtra* that the ultimately pure *dharmakāya* is established when the unattached and unhindered universal wisdom and insight are finally realized through permanent elimination of obstacles caused by the most subtle of *kleśas* and knowledge (*jñeyāvaraṇa*). This is done through the methods of *samatha* and *vipaśyanā* meditation at the stage of Tathāgatahood.<sup>137</sup> The idea expressed in the *sūtra* is that the *dharmakāya* has pure *tathatā* as its essence and that all the defilements are adventitious. In effect, the transformation of support is the elimination of both *kleśas* and the hindrance of knowledge, and it is through this process that the bodhisattva attains Buddhahood.

In the Yogācāra *śāstra* literature, as Makransky points out, the term *dharmakāya* has two basic meanings: (1) an inclusive sense as the state of Buddhahood in its entirety (including the three bodies), and (2) an exclusive sense as the first of the three bodies. The *dharmakāya* in the second definition consists of the *svābhāvakāya*, the essence of Buddhahood.<sup>138</sup> In whichever sense the Yogācāra school perceives it, the *dharmakāya* is the transformation of support.

According to the Yogācāra, the first meaning of the *dharmakāya* in the sense of Buddhahood in its entirety refers to the three bodies. The author of the *Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkāra* (MSA) sees the three bodies as functions of the purified Dharma Realm (*dharmadhātu-viśuddha*). But the author of the *Mahāyānasamgraha* (MS) considers that Buddhahood as a whole is the *dharmakāya* which performs three functions pertaining to three different categories of people. The *dharmakāya* or *svābhāvakāya* is exclusively for the Buddhas as only they can realize real nature. The *saṃbhogakāya* is for the great bodhisattvas and the *nirmāṇakāya* is for sentient beings. Since the three bodies are three functional aspects of one Buddhahood, there is no

contradiction between them.

The second meaning of the *dharmakāya* is explained in detail in the *Yogācāra śāstras*. The MSA, which is the first text to expound on the three bodies of the Buddha, explains that the *dharmakāya* is the body of essence (*svābhāvakāya*) and its characteristic is that of fundamental transformation. This transformation is the conversion of the eighth consciousness (*ālayavijñāna*) into the mirror wisdom (*ādarśajñāna*) and the seventh consciousness (*manasvijñāna*) into the equality wisdom (*samatājñāna*).<sup>139</sup> It takes place in immeasurable aeons from the time the bodhisattva has attained the path of direct seeing (*darśana-mārga*) which is the first of the ten stages (*bhūmi*) until he attains Buddhahood. In the ten stages of bodhisattva realization, two kinds of wisdom are obtained: the non-discrimination wisdom (*nirvikalpa-jñāna*) for the maturation of Buddha Dharma and the subsequently obtained wisdom (*prṣṭha-labdha-jñāna*) for the maturation of sentient beings. Thus the transformation is completed when all discriminations are eliminated through diamond meditation.<sup>140</sup>

Following the line of thought of the MSA, the MS further explains that the *dharmakāya* is attained through turning away and destroying the container consciousness (*alayavijñāna*). This is the transformation of the container consciousness into mirror wisdom. The MS expounds the process thus. The permeation (*vāsanā*) of hearing is the seed of the *dharmakāya* and it arises in countering the container consciousness, but it is not comprised within that container consciousness. Since it is an outflow from the transcendent and purest Reality Realm (*dharmadhātu*), even though a worldly state, it brings about a transcendent mind. All such superior states of mind counter (1) delusory passions, (2) all bad migrations and (3) the decay consequent upon all non-virtuous actions, and enable one to maintain the continuity of life, thus increasing the possibility of an encounter with the Buddhas and bodhisattvas.

Although it is a worldly state, this permeation of hearing is within the

*dharmakāya* and is therefore attainable by novice bodhisattvas. As the level of this permeation gradually increases from small to intermediate to high, the maturing consciousness will decrease proportionately. The support is hence converted. When that support is entirely converted, the container consciousness will be eliminated altogether, replete with all its seeds.<sup>141</sup>

This exposition of the process of transformation is actually the same as that described in the \**Samdhinirmocanasūtra*, the elimination of the adventitious defilements (*kleśas*). According to Paramārtha, this is because the seed of the *dharmakāya* flows out from ‘the pure Reality Realm (*dharmadhātu*)’, which is nothing but the *tathatā*.<sup>142</sup> This seed brings about the pure mind, which eliminates all the bad *karmas* of the past, present and future, and thus the light of the *dharmakāya* is revealed.

Paul Griffiths and others point out that there is a conceptual problem with regard to the attainment and realization of the *dharmakāya*. If all sentient beings have the *dharmakāya* by the name *buddhadhātu*, then there is no attainment, but rather a realization.<sup>143</sup> That is why Paramārtha’s version of the MS makes a distinction between the ‘attainment’ and ‘realization’ of the *dharmakāya*, which can perhaps be understood from the explanation given in the \**Vijñaptimātratāsiddhiśāstra*. It explains that according to the *sūtras* (the \**Buddhabhūmisūtra* etc.), the *dharmakāya* is suchness (*tathatā*) while according to *śāstras* (the *Mahāyānasamgraha*), the *svābhāvakāya* is obtained by the transformation of the eighth consciousness (*ālayavijñāna*) into the great mirror wisdom (*ādarśajñāna*).<sup>144</sup> Thus, from the point of view of the *sūtras*, the *dharmakāya* can only be realized because it is the suchness of all *dharmas*, while from the point of view of the *śāstras*, it is to be attained because it is a transformation of consciousness into wisdom. This is actually the result of looking at one problem from two different angles. The *sūtras* view it from the angle of the essence of Buddhahood and state that the *dharmakāya* is intrinsically pure. Hence, there is only realization. But the *śāstras* view it in relation to the practice of

bodhisattvas, which is a process of eliminating the adventitious defilements, and therefore it is an attainment. Hence, in his *\*Buddhabhūmisūtraśāstra*, Bandhuprabha states: “It is said in MS that the *dharmakāya* is obtained through the transformation of the *ālayavijñāna*. This is to say that through the elimination of the two kinds of seed of defilement in the eighth consciousness, the pure *dharmakāya* is revealed.”<sup>145</sup> In other words, the transformation of support is the elimination of the seed of defilement. Yogācārins assert that there is only consciousness, and all other things including the defilements are nothing but an illusion. It is stated in the *\*Ratnagoṭravibhāgaśāstra* that there are two topics concerning the realization of the *dharmakāya*: the first is to realize that the essence is intrinsically pure, and the second is to realize that all *kleśas* are originally quiescent.<sup>146</sup> The *kleśas* are not real but only an illusion, and therefore the *dharmakāya* is only to be realized.

John Keenan asserts that wisdom as the essence of the *dharmakāya* is understood by Asaṅga as “the wisdom of emptiness”.<sup>147</sup> However, the Yogācārins do not advocate absolute emptiness, they are more concerned with ‘the subtle existence’ within emptiness. Therefore, the MS mentions that one of the characteristics of the *dharmakāya* is the non-duality of existence and non-existence, conditioned and unconditioned, unity and differentiation. Our concern is the non-duality of existence and non-existence. The MS commentary translated by Paramārtha explains this point clearly:

“The text states: ‘it (the *dharmakāya*) is characterized by non-duality, because it is neither characterized as existent nor as non-existent.’ Non-duality means neither existence nor non-existence. Existence means to be eternal, while non-existence means to come to an end. Neither existence nor non-existence means that (the Dharma Body) is neither eternal nor ending, for it is free from these two extremes.”

“The line ‘All *dharmas* are empty, because this emptiness which is not nothing is the characteristic’ means that all things are brought about through discrimination and do not really exist; for this is precisely the characteristic of the two emptinesses, i.e.,

neither existence nor non-existence. The Dharma Body, which is not non-existent, is (characterized) by this twofold emptiness, and therefore the absence of these two extremes is the characteristic of Dharma Body.”<sup>148</sup>

According to this explanation, the *dharmakāya* is ‘neither existence nor non-existence’, because existence and non-existence are named as the two extremes. Here no existence and no non-existence are also termed two kinds of emptiness. Thus, according to the Yogācārins, the *dharmakāya* is not an absolute nothingness for the emphasis is placed on ‘neither existence nor non-existence’, while the emphasis of the \**Prajñāpāramitāsūtras* and the early Madhayamikas is on the aspect of emptiness that is nothingness.

As we have seen, the concept of the *dharmakāya* has been fully developed and reinterpreted in the Mahāyāna *sūtras* and *śāstras* in two aspects: (1) philosophical and (2) soteriological. On the basis of the Mahāsāṃghika transcendental Buddhology, the Mahāyānists reinterpreted Buddhahood and identified the Tathāgata with a new concept that they have introduced: *tathatā*, the true nature of all *dharmas*. This is a crucial development in that it provides the doctrinal foundation for the Mahāyāna concept of the Buddha. *Tathatā* has become the underlying principle of Buddhahood, the *dharmakāya* in later Mahāyāna *sūtras*. Since this underlying principle is the true and eternal Buddha that pervades the entire cosmos, both animate and inanimate, the *dharmakāya* became the embodiment of an all embracing principle that supports the universe. Thus, at the stage of Buddhahood, it is named *dharmakāya* since it is pure and eternal at the stage of sentient beings, it is named the *tathāgatagarbha* or *Buddhadhātu* since it is covered with defilement. It is also named the *mahāparinirvāṇa* at the stage of Buddhahood because it is always in quiescence. This is the philosophical development of the concept of the *dharmakāya*. The soteriological aspect of the *dharmakāya* also started in the *Prajnaparamitasutras* although its emphasis is on the intellectual aspect of Buddhism. The \**Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā*

explicitly states at the beginning that the Buddha emanates beams of light from his whole body before he teaches the *sutra*. Living beings that encounter this light are held to reach liberation. However, in Dharmarakṣa's translation of Mahayana texts the soteriological aspect is enhanced by saying that the Buddha is the *dharmakāya*, which is eternal and can deliver suffering sentient beings by its numerous manifestations. This soteriological aspect of the Buddha is further developed in the *Avataṃsaka*, which confirms that sentient beings can find liberation just by seeing the *dharmakāya*, encountering its light or by hearing its doctrine. The soteriological aspect of the *dharmakāya* is later assigned to the *saṃbhogakāya* and the *nirmāṇakāya* to demonstrate the different ways by which its power is used in the deliverance of the great bodhisattvas and sentient beings respectively.

<sup>1</sup> N. Dutt has already collected and analysed the relevant passages in the Pāli *Nikāyas* concerning the concept of the Buddha in his *Mahāyāna Buddhism* (1978a), 138-140.

<sup>2</sup> D ii, 154.

<sup>3</sup> M. No. 108.

<sup>4</sup> T1, 26a. The translation is mine.

<sup>5</sup> T1, 172b. The translation is mine.

<sup>6</sup> T1, 188a. The translation is mine.

<sup>7</sup> T1, 204b-c. The translation is mine.

<sup>8</sup> T1, 654b.

<sup>9</sup> S ii, 221; M iii, 29; D iii, 84. Similar passages are also found in M i, 12f, ii, 84, iii, 195, 224.

<sup>10</sup> N. Dutt also has the same opinion that in this passage the word Dhamma has no metaphysical meaning at all.

<sup>11</sup> *Sumaṅgalavilāsinī* (*Dīghanikāya* commentary), iii, 865. 'Kasmā Tathāgato Dhammakāyo ti vutto? Tathāgato hi tetipiṭakamaṃ Buddhavacanamaṃ hadayena cintetyā vācāya abhinīhari. Ten' assa kāyo Dhammamayattā Dhammo va.'

<sup>12</sup> T1, 37b.

<sup>13</sup> T2, 457b. The translation is mine.

<sup>14</sup> T2, 303c. The translation is mine.

<sup>15</sup> A ii, 38.

<sup>16</sup> Cited from N Dutt (1978a), 140.

<sup>17</sup> T2, 717c-718a.

<sup>18</sup> S iii, 120. "*Alam Vakkali kiṃ te pūtikāyena diṭṭhena. Yo kho Vakkali dhammaṃ passati so maṃ passati. Yo maṃ passati so dhammaṃ passati.*" The translation is adopted from F. L. Woodward (1995), Vol.III, p.103, with a few changes.

<sup>19</sup> \**Samyuktāgama*, T2, 346b, \**Ekottarāgama*, T2, 642c.

<sup>20</sup> *Sāratthapakāsinī*, ii, 314. *Yo kho, Vakkali, dhammaṃ ti, idha Bhagavā 'dhammakāyo kho dasseti. Nava-vidho hi lokuttara-dhammo Tathāgatassa kāyo nāma. Idāni therassa tiparivaṭṭa-dhamma-desanam ārabhanto tam kim maññasī tiādīm āha.*

<sup>21</sup> It is found in various places in the early scripture: *Samyutta*, ii, 25; \**Samyukta*, T2, 84b, 85b-c; *Anguttara*, I, 286. This idea is also found in a number of secondary sources such as *Visuddhimagga*, 518; \**Pañcaviṃsati*, 198; \**Aṣṭasāhasrikā*, 274; *Laṅkāvatāra*, 143; \**Daśabhūmika*, 65.

<sup>22</sup> The statement that neither the Buddha nor another person is the inventor of the law of dependent origination is found only in the Chinese \**Samyuktāgama* (T2, 85b-c), *sūtra* number 299, but not in the Pāli canon according to Chizen Akanuma (1956), 45, number 17. It is said that Śākyamuni attained enlightenment through the realisation of this very Law and then he preached it to all sentient beings.

<sup>23</sup> 《中阿含經》(三〇)象跡喻經第十 (T1, 467a), M I, 191. Even the title of the *sūtra*, in which this passage is found in both the \**Madhyamāgama* and the *Majjhimanikāya*, is the same: the *Mahāhatthipadopama*.

<sup>24</sup> T4, 185c. This *sūtra* contains sixteen stories and the story of the bhikṣuni Utpalavarṇā is the fourteenth.

<sup>25</sup> T25, 137a. The translation is mine.

<sup>26</sup> T2, 550a. The translation is mine.

<sup>27</sup> T2, 549c. The translation is mine.

<sup>28</sup> T2, 787b.

<sup>29</sup> T2, 168b. The translation is mine.

<sup>30</sup> T2, 711c; 712b; 772c.

<sup>31</sup> The *Milindapañha* mentions the five factors of *dharmakāya* on page 98. However, the first part of the Pāli text from page 1 to 89 is earlier than the latter part from page 90 to the end, because it corresponds quite well to the Chinese translation of the \**Nāgasena Bhikṣu Sūtra*, which is the counterpart of the Pāli text. And on page 89, there is a concluding sentence as follows: "Here ends the answering of the problems of the questions of Milinda."

<sup>32</sup> *Visuddhimagga*, 234.

<sup>33</sup> Lewis Lancaster (1975), 30.

<sup>34</sup> Lewis Lancaster (1975), 31-33. We will not refer to the Tibetan translation in our research since it was translated at a much later date.

<sup>35</sup> É. Lamotte (1976), pp.lx-lxi.

<sup>36</sup> *Uppādā vā tathāgatānaṃ anuppāda vā tathāgatānaṃ thinā va sā dhātu dhammaṭṭhitatā dhammanivāmatā idappaccayatā*. S ii, 25; 若佛出世，若未出世，此法常住。\**Samyuktāgama*, T2, 84b; A I, 286.

<sup>37</sup> S ii, 25.

<sup>38</sup> The *Udāna*, 80.

<sup>39</sup> The translation is mine. The following is a table of comparison of a passage on the *tathatā* found in two translations of the *Aṣṭa*: the *Daoxingbanruojing* and Kumārajīva's translation.

The <i>Daoxingbanruojing</i> (T8, 450a)	Kumārajīva's translation (T8, 558b)
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<p>恒薩阿竭知色之本無，如知色本無，痛癢思想生死識亦爾。何謂知識？知識之本無。何所是本無，是欲有所得者，是亦本無。恒薩阿竭亦本無，因慧如住。何謂所本無，世間亦是本無，何所是本無者，一切諸法亦本無，如諸法本無，須陀洹道亦本無，斯陀含道亦本無，阿那含道亦本無，阿羅漢道、辟支佛道亦本無，恒薩阿竭亦復本無。一本無，無有異，無所不入，悉知一切。是者須菩提，般若波羅蜜即是本無，恒薩阿竭因般若波羅蜜，自致成阿耨多羅三耶三佛，照明持世間，是為示現。恒薩阿竭因般若波羅蜜，悉知世間本無無有異。如是須菩提，恒薩阿竭悉知本無，爾故號字為佛。</p>	<p>復次須菩提，如來因般若波羅蜜知色相，雲何知色相？知如如。須菩提，如來知受想行識相，雲何知識相？知如如。須菩提，五陰如即是如來所說出沒，如五陰如即是世間如，五陰如即是一切法如，一切法如即是須陀洹果如，斯陀含果、阿那含果、阿羅漢果、辟支佛道如，辟支佛道如即是如來如。是諸如皆是一如，無二無別無盡無量，如是須菩提，如來因般若波羅蜜，得是如相。如是須菩提，般若波羅蜜，示諸佛世間，能生諸佛，諸佛知世間如，如實得是如故，名為如來。</p>
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From the above comparison, we can see that they are almost identical. However, this passage is not found in the Sanskrit version of the *Aṣṭa*. It is likely that Lokakṣema's translation represents the earliest version, the Sanskrit version is the latest and Kumārajīva's translation falls in between.

<sup>40</sup> The *Daoxingbanruojing*, T8, 453b, Kumārajīva's translation of the *Aṣṭa*, T8, 562b-c.

<sup>41</sup> The *Daoxingbanruojing*, T8, 450a-b, Kumārajīva's translation of the *Aṣṭa*, T8, 558c.

<sup>42</sup> T8, 468a. The translation is mine.

<sup>43</sup> T8, 466a-b.

<sup>44</sup> T8, 439a.

<sup>45</sup> T8, 427c. The translation is mine.

<sup>46</sup> T8, 442b-c. The translation is mine.

<sup>47</sup> T8, 442c. 心者本清淨，可有所作。

<sup>48</sup> T8, 427b.

<sup>49</sup> T8, 335a.

<sup>50</sup> The *Fanguangbanruojing* (放光般若經 T8, No.221) was translated by Mokṣala in 291 CE.

<sup>51</sup> T8, 145a.

<sup>52</sup> T8, 145b. The translation is mine.

<sup>53</sup> Kumārajīva's translation of the *Aṣṭa*, T8, 584b. See also E. Conze (1970), 216.

<sup>54</sup> Kumārajīva translated two versions of the *\*Prajñāpāramitāsūtra*: the small version (No.227 《小品般若波羅密經》) is a translation of the *Aṣṭa* and the large version (No.223 《摩訶般若波羅密經》) is a translation of the *\*Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā*. There are two textual evidences to support the assertion that the small version is similar to the extant Sanskrit version of *Aṣṭa*. First, in the chapter on Suchness (Chinese: T8, 561a-563c; Conze (1970), 113-120), both versions mention that Subhūti is born after the Tathāgata since the suchness in the Tathāgata and Subhūti is the same, not different. Second, near the end of this chapter, both versions also mention Pūrṇa (Chinese: Pūrṇamaitrāyaṇīputra) who suggests that Śāripūtra should ask Subhūti whether there is a bodhisattva vehicle. However, in the three early translations, there is no mention of Pūrṇa and Subhūti being born from the Tathāgata.



<sup>55</sup> L. Lancaster (1975), 36.

<sup>56</sup> Y. Kajiyama (1989), 65-66.

<sup>57</sup> T8, 476b-477b.

<sup>58</sup> This *sūtra* was translated into Chinese between 222-229 CE. See É. Lamotte (1976), xci.

<sup>59</sup> T14, 523c. In this discussion, we use the chronology of the Chinese translations because the date of the composition of the *Prajñāpāramitāsūtras* is impossible to determine at present.

<sup>60</sup> T14, 542a.

<sup>61</sup> T8, 67c.

<sup>62</sup> T8, 15b. The *Fangguangbanruojing*: the *dharmatā* abides in the reality of the Buddha, the *sarvajñā*, which is neither in existence nor to be seen, because it is empty internally and externally and is empty in both existence and non-existence.

<sup>63</sup> T8, 584b.

<sup>64</sup> Dharmarakṣa was active in China during 266 to 313 CE, and belonged to the early translators.

<sup>65</sup> T10, 592c. 去來今佛，一切悉等，爲一法身。 The translation is mine.

<sup>66</sup> T10, 639c. 解知諸佛皆一法身。 The translation is mine.

<sup>67</sup> T10, 659b. 解法身一，無去來今，平等三世。 The translation is mine.

<sup>68</sup> T10, 627a. 然其法身，皆遍十方，諸佛世界。 The translation is mine.

<sup>69</sup> T10, 598b. 如虛空界，無所不苞，無所不入，或至一切有色無色，有形無形，有處無處，亦無所至，亦無有來，則無有身，以無身故，無所不周，佛身如是。

<sup>70</sup> T10, 592c. 法身慧體，究竟無相。... 慧以一身，示於無量所行之體，周於無限法界之裏。 The translation is mine.

<sup>71</sup> T10, 598b. 無所見者，爲見如來... 所以者何，用無身故，如來身者，欲以開化眾生之故，因現身耳。 The translation is mine.

<sup>72</sup> T10, 640a. 菩薩解了佛慧，爲一法身。 The translation is mine.

<sup>73</sup> T10, 458b. 以致法身至聖慧體，具足諸佛本所志願。 The translation is mine.

<sup>74</sup> T10, 653b. 諸天人民，著於色身，故現色身，如是無常，法身常存。 The translation is mine.

<sup>75</sup> T10, 479a. 法身清淨，壞來至義。 The translation is mine.

<sup>76</sup> T10, 577c. 又如法身，本之清淨。 The translation is mine.

<sup>77</sup> T10, 637a. 其菩薩身，普無不入，(與)諸去來今如來至真，同合一身，是爲十身。菩薩住此，逮成如來不可盡業無極法身。 The translation is mine.

<sup>78</sup> T10, 582a. 彼菩薩，與過去當來今現在諸佛，而行一德本，彼菩薩(與諸如來)合爲一身，以法身無踰者。

<sup>79</sup> T25, 121c. 是法性身，滿十方虛空，無量無邊，色像端正，相好莊嚴，無量光明無量音聲。 The translation is mine.

<sup>80</sup> T9, 399c. 法王安住妙法堂，法身光明無不照，法性如實無異相，是名樂音海法門如來法身等法界，普應眾生悉對現，如來法王化眾生，隨順諸法悉調伏。 The translation is mine.

<sup>81</sup> Chapters two, three, four, five and twenty-seven are new additions in Śikṣānanda's translation because they are not found in Buddhahadra's translation.

<sup>82</sup> Prajñā's translation is in forty fascicules, but the first thirty-nine are expanded on the basis of the last chapter of the first two translations: the Entry into the cosmos (*dharmadhātu*), and the last fascicule corresponds to chapter thirty-one of

Buddhabhadra's translation and chapter thirty-six of Śikṣānanda's translation: the practice of universal good.

<sup>83</sup> Yinshun (1994), 1000-1006.

<sup>84</sup> T9, 444a. 實以無實法，正覺等真偽，以無和合相，是名為菩提。現佛非緣合，去來亦復然，一切法無相，是則佛真性。若能如是觀，諸法甚深義，則見無量佛，法身真實相。The translation is mine.

<sup>85</sup> T10, 83b. 於實見真實，非實見不實，如是究竟解，是故名為佛。佛法不可覺，了此名覺法，諸佛如是修，一法不可得。知以一故眾，知以眾故一，諸法無所依，但從和合起。無能作所作，唯從業想生，雲何知如是，異此無有故。一切法無住，定處不可得，諸佛住於此，究竟不動搖。The translation is mine.

<sup>86</sup> T9, 429b. 文殊法常爾，法王唯一法，一切無礙人，一道出生死。一切諸佛身，唯是一法身，一心一智慧，力無畏亦然。The translation is mine.

<sup>87</sup> T10, 37c. 諸佛種種方便門，出興一切諸刹海，皆隨眾生心所樂，此是如來善權力。諸佛法身不思議，無色無形無影像，能為眾生現眾相，隨其心樂悉令見。The translation is mine.

<sup>88</sup> T9, 617a.

<sup>89</sup> T9, 616a-c.

<sup>90</sup> T9, 616c. 佛子，生盲眾生，雖不見如來智慧日光，然此眾生，亦為如來智慧日光之所饒益。The translation is mine.

<sup>91</sup> T9, 617b. 如來有光名寶身智，若有眾生觸斯光者，皆悉得與佛身同色，若有眾生見斯光者，皆悉速得清淨法眼，若有眾生觸斯光者，除貧賤苦，尊貴富樂，乃至無上菩提快樂。The translation is mine.

<sup>92</sup> T9, 617b. 如來法身亦復如是，為大寶王功德積聚大智慧藏。The translation is mine.

<sup>93</sup> T9, 599b.

<sup>94</sup> T9, 399b.

<sup>95</sup> T10, 444c. 刹塵心念可數知，大海中水可飲盡，虛空可量風可繫，無能盡說佛功德。The translation is mine.

<sup>96</sup> T25, 342a.

<sup>97</sup> T25, 336c. 一從他方佛國來生，二從兜率天上來，三從人道中來。T25, 337b 彼二處來者是法身菩薩，變身無量以度眾生，故來生是間，人道中者皆是肉身。

<sup>98</sup> T25, 342a, 146c.

<sup>99</sup> T25, 342a.

<sup>100</sup> T10, 808a-b.

<sup>101</sup> T9, 455a.

<sup>102</sup> The translator of this *sūtra* is Buddhabhadra who also translated the sixty-fascicule *Avataṃsaka*. He was active in China in 398-412 CE and a contemporary of Kumārajīva. They both helped each other in their translation works. There is another translation of the \**Tathāgatagarbhasūtra* done by Amoghavajra in the eighth century.

<sup>103</sup> T16, 457c. 我以佛眼觀一切眾生，貪欲恚癡諸煩惱中，有如來智、如來眼、如來身，結加趺坐儼然不動。善男子，一切眾生，雖在諸趣煩惱身中，有如來藏常無染汙，德相備足如我無異。又善男子，譬如天眼之人，觀未敷花，見諸花內有如來身結加趺坐，除去萎花便得顯現。如是善男子，佛見眾生如來藏已，欲令開敷為說經法，除滅煩惱顯現佛性。善男子，諸佛法爾，若佛出世若不出世，一切眾生如來之藏常住不變，但彼眾生煩惱覆故，如來出世廣為說法，除滅塵勞淨

一切智。The translation is mine.

<sup>104</sup> T12, 221c. 如是如來法身不離煩惱藏名如來藏。The translation is mine.

<sup>105</sup> T31, 828b. There are three meanings when the Tathāgata says that all sentient beings have the *tathāgatagarbha*. What are the three? First, the *dharmakāya* of the Tathāgata is in each and every sentient being, so the *gāthā* says that the *dharmakāya* pervades everywhere. Second, there is no difference between the Tathāgata and the *tathatā*, so the *gāthā* says that the *tathatā* is no difference. Third, all sentient beings truly have the *tathatā*, the *buddhadhātu*, so the *gāthā* says that there is truly the *buddhadhātu*.

<sup>106</sup> T16, 467a. 第一義諦者即是眾生界，眾生界者即是如來藏，如來藏者即是法身。The translation is mine.

<sup>107</sup> T16, 467a. 舍利弗，即此法身過於恒沙，無邊煩惱所纏，從無始世來隨順世間，波浪漂流往來生死名為眾生。即此法身厭離世間生死苦惱，棄捨一切諸有欲求，行十波羅蜜，攝八萬四千法門，修菩提行名為菩薩。The translation is mine.

<sup>108</sup> T16, 467b. 不離眾生界有法身，不離法身有眾生界，眾生界即法身，法身即眾生界。舍利弗，此二法者義一名異。The translation is mine.

<sup>109</sup> The MMPS has three themes: (1) the Buddha is eternal because the *dharmakāya* exists forever, (2) the *mahāparinirvāṇa* has four virtues, (3) all sentient beings including *icchantika* (those who do not have the good roots) have the potential to become Buddhas (*tathāgatagarbha*).

<sup>110</sup> See Kawamura Kosho (1972), 'Sūtras Quoted in the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*.'

<sup>111</sup> T9, 429b. 一切諸佛身，唯是一法身。The translation is mine.

<sup>112</sup> T12, 567a. 善男子，我於經中說如來身凡有二種：一者生身，二者法身。言生身者，即是方便應化之身，如是身者，可得言是，生老病死，長短黑白，是此是彼，是學無學... 法身即是，常樂我淨，永離一切，生老病死，非白非黑，非長非短，非此非彼，非學非無學。若佛出世及不出世，常住不動，無有變易。The translation is mine.

<sup>113</sup> T12, 382c. 如來身者，是常住身，是不壞身，是金剛身，非穢食身，是則法身。The translation is mine.

<sup>114</sup> T12, 502b. 能斷初禪乃至能斷非想非非想處結則得安樂，如是安樂亦名涅槃，不得名為大涅槃也。何以故？還生煩惱有習氣故。雲何名為煩惱習氣？聲聞緣覺有煩惱習氣，所謂我身、我衣、我去、我來、我說、我聽。諸佛如來入於涅槃，涅槃之性無我無樂唯有常淨，是則名為煩惱習氣。... 以是義故二乘所得非大涅槃。何以故？無常樂我淨故，常樂我淨乃得名為大涅槃也。The translation is mine.

<sup>115</sup> T12, 502c-503a.

<sup>116</sup> The twenty-five kinds of existence refer to the 25 sub-realms of the three realms, where sentient beings transmigrate from one to the other. In the desire realm (*kāmadhātu*) there are fourteen existences, in the form realm (*rūpyadhātu*) there are seven existences, and in the formless realm (*arūpyadhātu*), four existences. The twenty-five are grouped into the Four Evil Destinies (四惡道), the Four Continents (四洲), the Six Heavens of Desire (六欲天), the Four Meditation Heavens (四禪天), the Heaven of the Five Pure Abodes (五淨居天), and the Four Spheres of the Formless Realm (四空處天). Cited from *Combined Digital Dictionaries of Buddhism and East Asian Literary Terms*.

<sup>117</sup> T12, 502c-503b.

<sup>118</sup> T12, 596a. 滅內外入所生六識，名之爲常，以是常故名之爲我。有常、我故，名之爲樂。常、我、樂故名之爲淨。善男子，眾生厭苦斷是苦因，自在遠離是名爲我，以是因緣，我今宣說常樂我淨。The translation is mine.

<sup>119</sup> T12, 545c. 如來之身，金剛無邊，常樂我淨，身心無礙，具八自在故。The translation is mine.

<sup>120</sup> T12, 556c. 如來常住，則名爲我，如來法身，無邊無礙，不生不滅，得八自在，是名爲我。The translation is mine.

<sup>121</sup> T12, 567a. 法身即是，常樂我淨。The translation is mine.

<sup>122</sup> T12, 220c. 阿耨多羅三藐三菩提者，即是涅槃界，涅槃界者即是如來法身。The translation is mine.

<sup>123</sup> T12, 376c. 何等名爲秘密之藏？猶如伊字三點，若並則不成伊，蹤亦不成。如摩薩首羅面上三目，乃得成三點。若別亦不得成。我亦如是，解脫之法亦非涅槃，如來之身亦非涅槃，摩訶般若亦非涅槃。三法各異亦非涅槃。我今安住如是三法，爲眾生故名爲涅槃。The translation is mine.

<sup>124</sup> T31, 812a. 一由佛法不相離故，說名法身，二由性一切處如，故名如來，三由無虛妄顛倒故，名真實諦，四由本來寂靜故，名般涅槃。是四義四名，於如來性，無有差別故。The translation is mine.

<sup>125</sup> T31, 812a-b.

<sup>126</sup> T9, 599b.

<sup>127</sup> T9, 723a. T10, 372b.

<sup>128</sup> T9, 599b. 無窮盡身，滅眾虛妄如電光身，如幻夢身，如鏡像身，如淨日身。The translation is mine.

<sup>129</sup> T16, 550a. 法身者爲作法耶非作法耶，爲是因耶爲是果耶，爲能見耶爲所見耶，爲是說耶爲可說耶，爲是智耶智所覺耶？如是等辭句，如來法身爲異耶爲不異耶？The translation is mine.

<sup>130</sup> This chapter is only found in the version of the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra* translated by Bodhiruci in 513 CE. According to D. T. Suzuki, the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra* is “a collection of notes unsystematically strung together”. (Suzuki (1930), 17) Therefore, there were already five versions of the Sanskrit original in existence when Śikṣānanda translated this *sūtra* for the fourth time. (Suzuki (1930), 9) So the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra*, the same as other Mahāyāna *sūtras*, is subject to additions and revisions. However, it was finalized before the formulation of the *trikāya* theory because this theory is not mentioned in any version of the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra*. Suzuki thinks that the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra* represents the last stage before the *trikāya* theory was formed.

<sup>131</sup> T16, 550a. 大慧，如來應正遍知法身之相，如是辭句等，非作法非不作法，非因非果。何以故？以二邊有過故。大慧，若言如來是作法者，是則無常，若無常者，一切作法應是如來，而佛如來應正遍知不許此法。大慧，若如來法身非作法者，則是無身，言有修行無量功德，一切行者則是虛妄。大慧，若不作者，應同兔角、石女兒等，以無作因，亦無身故。大慧，若法非因非果，非有非無，而彼法體，離四種相。大慧，彼四種法，名世間言說。大慧，若法離於四種法者，彼法但有名字，如石女兒。大慧，石女兒等惟是名字章句之法，說同四法，若墮四法者，則智者不取，如是一切問如來句，智者應知。The translation is mine.

<sup>132</sup> T16, 550b.

<sup>133</sup> According to Nāgārjuna, *prapañca* means words, which conceal and cover reality,

which are nothing but subjective counterfeits, and lead further into ignorance and affliction. But, according to the \**Yogācārabhūmiśāstra* (T30, 815a), “The words which can bring meaningless speculations and discriminations are called *prapañca*. Why? Because they do not increase an iota of wholesome *dharma*, but conversely they increase bad *dharma* when one utters them. This is named *prapañca*.”

<sup>134</sup> T16, 550c.

<sup>135</sup> T16, 551a.

<sup>136</sup> T16, 685a. There are two complete Chinese translations of the \**Samdhinirmocanasūtra* by Bodhiruci and Xuanzang respectively. These two translations are almost identical. The translation is mine.

<sup>137</sup> T16, 678c and 702a.

<sup>138</sup> John, J. Makransky (1997), 61.

<sup>139</sup> T31, 606b-607b.

<sup>140</sup> T31, 625c-626b.

<sup>141</sup> See Xuanzang’s translation of the MS, T31, 136c; Paramārtha’s translation of the MS, T31, 117a-b.

<sup>142</sup> T31, 174a.

<sup>143</sup> Paul Griffiths, Hakamaya Noriaki, John P. Keenan, and Paul L. Swanson, (1989), 93.

<sup>144</sup> T31, 58a. The \**Vijñaptimātratāsiddhiśāstra* does not mention the title of the *sūtra* and the *śāstra*. However, they are supplied in its commentary written by Xuanzang’s great disciple Kuiji who assisted him in his translation. See also Louis de La Vallée Poussin’s translation: *Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi: la Siddhi de Hiuan-Tsang*, Vol. II, p.706.

<sup>145</sup> T26, 326a. The translation is mine.

<sup>146</sup> T31, 824c.

<sup>147</sup> John P. Keenan (1989), 23. Introduction to the translation of the tenth chapter of the *Mahāyānasamgraha*.

<sup>148</sup> This translation is adopted from Paul Griffiths, Hakamaya Noriaki, John P. Keenan, and Paul L. Swanson (1989, p.82) with the addition of “The line ‘All dharmas are empty and this emptiness which is not nothing is the characteristic.’” which is omitted from their translation.

## Chapter Five

### The Origin and Development of the Saṃbhogakāya

#### 1. Introduction

The term *saṃbhogakāya*, denoting the body of enjoyment of the Buddha, first appeared in the *Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkāra* (MSA).<sup>1</sup> According to Habito and Makransky, it was in this text that the earliest systematic explanation of the *trikāya* doctrine was formulated.<sup>2</sup> The introduction of the concept of the *saṃbhogakāya* was most probably a solution to the complex problem concerning the physical body (*rūpakāya*) of the Buddha. It was formulated on the basis of the teachings in the early and middle Mahāyāna *sūtras* such as the *\*Avataṃsaka*. The *rūpakāya* has become the central point of contention between the Mahāsāṃghikas and the Sarvāstivādins when the former idealised the Buddha and attributed many supernatural qualities to him over the course of time. Since the Sarvāstivādins did not agree with the Mahāsāṃghikas on these qualities, they debated over the purity of the *rūpakāya* of the Buddha for many centuries. These supernatural qualities had been further developed in the Mahāyāna *sūtras* when the Mahāyānists attributed to the Buddha immeasurable merit as a result of bodhisattva practice. This in turn caused other problems concerning the *rūpakāya* of the Buddha for the Mahāyānists themselves, such as the contradiction between the short lifespan of Śākyamuni and his immeasurable merit. The controversial points of debate from the early Indian Buddhist schools up to the Mahāyāna revolved around the supernatural qualities of the *rūpakāya*, which were not found in the physical body of the historical Buddha and which were not described in the *Nikāyas* and the *Āgamas*. It was with the aim of solving such controversies that the author of the MSA formulated the *trikāya* theory after having summarized the developments concerning the concept of the Buddha in the early and middle Mahāyāna *sūtras* and *śāstras*.

Some Japanese and Western scholars have made studies of the doctrine of the

*trikāya*, but few scholars have addressed the origin of the concept of the *saṃbhogakāya*. D. T. Suzuki was perhaps the first scholar to discuss the origin of the concept of the *saṃbhogakāya* in a western language. He is of the opinion that the *saṃbhogakāya* is vaguely conceived as *niṣyanda-buddha* in the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra*.<sup>3</sup> However, Suzuki states that the concept of the *niṣyanda-buddha* does not include the idea of enjoyment as is implied in the concept of the *saṃbhogakāya*. The notion of the *niṣyanda-buddha* in the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra* refers mainly to its functions and seems to be quite different from the notion of the *saṃbhogakāya* as explained by Asaṅga. There is a vague suggestion in the *sūtra* that the *niṣyanda-buddha* has his abode in the *Akaṇiṣṭha* heaven where, after arduous training, bodhisattvas attain perfect enlightenment and become Buddhas. It is evident that the *niṣyanda-buddha* 'enjoys' the supreme blessedness in this heaven as a result of his long and arduous spiritual training. Thus, Suzuki thinks that the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra* marks the first step in the systematization and formulation of the *trikāya* theory. But he has not traced the development of the concept of the *saṃbhogakāya* any further.

Ruben Habito, who has conducted a brief survey of the bodies of the Buddha, is of the opinion that the appearance of the *saṃbhogakāya* is the result of a complex development involving the *Jātakas*, the bodhisattva ideal, the concept of the Buddha's merit, the idea of the existence of many other Buddhas, Pure Land Buddhism and other factors.<sup>4</sup> However, he has not provided a detailed study, but merely a brief discussion on the background to the rise of the *saṃbhogakāya* theory.

Takeuchi takes a similar approach to that of Habito but places more emphasis on the bodhisattva ideal. He asserts that the concept of the *saṃbhogakāya* is closely connected with the bodhisattva ideal, which in his view evolved concurrently with the concept of the Buddha.<sup>5</sup> The key aspect of the bodhisattva ideal, according to Takeuchi, is the vow that a bodhisattva takes at the beginning of his spiritual training until the attainment of Buddhahood. In this connection, Amitābha Buddha is considered as a *saṃbhogakāya* for he enjoys the blessings in the Pure Land as a

reward for deeds ensuing his vows in front of Lokeśvararāja Tathāgata when he was bhikṣu Dharmākara. However the actual origin and development of the theory of the *saṃbhogakāya* remains unanswered.

The present writer holds that the concept of *saṃbhogakāya* originated with the concept of merit (*puṇya*) as a reward for the meritorious deeds of bodhisattva practice. It is said in the \**Mahāprajñāpāramitāśāstra* (MPPŚ) that good as well as great causes result in great rewards, when referring to the superior light and great power that the Buddha possesses.<sup>6</sup> Thus the merit of the Buddha is directly connected with his qualities and attributes. It is evident from different texts that the more merit the Buddha possesses the more numerous the attributes he attains, including superhuman attributes. Over the course of time, the image of the historical Buddha gradually moved further away from the real world so much so that the superhuman character slowly overtook the memory of him as a human being. More and more emphasis on the merit of the Buddha became apparent, as it was thought that the appearance of the Buddha in the world was a rare event.<sup>7</sup> As a consequence of this tendency, the merit attributed to the Buddha gradually increased, and this in turn led to the increase of his attributes which pertain not only to physical but also supernatural qualities. The *Jātaka* marks the first step in the development of the concept of merit and its accumulation by the Buddha during his career as a bodhisattva. Viewed from another angle, it was the bodhisattva career of Siddhārtha Gautama that became expanded with additions of new dimensions. The *Jātaka* contains five hundred and forty-seven stories which portray the Buddha as a bodhisattva practising the *pāramitās* in many lives and in different forms such as king, Brahmin, farmer and even animals such as a monkey, all prior to his Buddhahood. As a result of all such meritorious deeds, the Buddha acquired the reward of the thirty-two major marks and eighty minor characteristics of a great man.

During the period of early Indian Buddhist schools, the bodhisattva career was assumed to require practice for three *mahāsaṃkhyeya kalpas* before attaining



enlightenment. During this long period of time, the bodhisattva has acquired a great heap of merit. The Sarvāstivādins stated that in order to gain each of the major marks, the Buddha performed one hundred meritorious acts; and in order to accrue all the merits required for all the thirty-two major marks, the Buddha diligently practised the *pāramitās* for a further ninety-one *mahākalpas*.<sup>8</sup> Thus it is evident that the merit accumulated during the three *mahāsaṃkhyeya kalpas* is immeasurable. However, the Mahāsāṃghika school took a significant step in enhancing the merit of the Buddha. According to the \**Lokānuvartanasūtra* of the Mahāsāṃghikas, “the wisdom, the merits and the power of the Buddha are immeasurable.”<sup>9</sup> As a result of this assumption, the Mahāsāṃghikas attributed many supernatural qualities to the Buddha and made him a transcendent being (*lokottara*) as discussed in chapter three. This was a major development in the concept of the Buddha during the period of the early Buddhist schools. Following the line of thought of the Mahāsāṃghikas, the Mahāyānists further proliferated the merit of the Buddha saying that he accumulated immeasurable merit during three *mahāsaṃkhyeya kalpas* by practising the six *pāramitās* while ascending the ten stages of the bodhisattva career. As stated in the *Avataṃsaka*, it is in this way that the Buddha obtained the *dharmakāya*, a state of eternal and blissful quiescence in Buddhahood. As discussed above, the Mahāyānists considered the *dharmakāya* as the Buddha. However, in its function as teacher to the great bodhisattvas who have one more birth to *bodhi*, it is named the *saṃbhogakāya*. And this *saṃbhogakāya* has all the supernatural attributes of the Buddha as a reward for bodhisattva practice. However, the progressive rumination on the merit of the Buddha and his attributes did not follow an easily traceable path. There were many problems and challenges that were posed by the Sthaviras who held the view of a human Buddha. In the end, however, all such considerations and counteraction contributed to the evolution and establishment of the concept of the *saṃbhogakāya*.

## 2. The Debate between Sarvāstivāda and Mahāsāṃghika Schools on the Physical Body of the Buddha

During the period of the early Indian Buddhist schools, all schools shared a common understanding of the attainments of the Buddha, namely the *dharmakāya*, which consisted of pure *dharmas*. However, in regard to the physical body of the Buddha, they were divided in opinion as to whether the Buddha was transcendental (*lokottara*), or in other words, whether the Buddha was physically pure or not. This issue became the main point of their contentions and debates, which mainly involved the Mahāsāṃghikas and their sub-schools such as the Lokottaravāda on the one hand, and the Sarvāstivādins representing the Sthaviravāda on the other. The Mahāsāṃghikas asserted that the Buddha is transcendental and that his physical body is pure while the Sarvāstivādins maintained that the Buddha is a human being and as a result, his physical body is not pure. The *Vibhāṣā*, the encyclopedia of the Sarvāstivāda School, provides us with information on the contents of their debates with the Mahāsāṃghikas.

According to the *Vibhāṣā*, the Mahāsāṃghikas held the opinion that the physical body (*rūpakāya*) of the Buddha is pure and without defilements.<sup>10</sup> They gave three reasons in support of their assertion. First, the *sūtras* state that the Tathāgata was born in the world, abided in the world, and yet was not defiled by the worldly *dharmas*.<sup>11</sup> Second, the Buddha had forever eradicated, without exception, all the *kleśas* and habitual forces (*vāsanā*). Third, the Buddha had cultivated both his mind and body, and if the mind is pure after completion of mental cultivation, then so is the physical body. The Buddha, therefore, is pure and transcendental (*lokottara*). However, the Sarvāstivādins did not agree with them concerning the physical body of the Buddha and asserted its impurity. They also found passages from the early *sūtras* in support of their statement. They argued that on account of ignorance and attachment, the foolish obtain their physical bodies with consciousness and so do the wise.<sup>12</sup> The Buddha

was included in the category of the wise and his physical body was the result of ignorance and attachment and therefore impure.<sup>13</sup> The Sarvāstivādins further argued that if the physical body of the Buddha was pure without defilement, then women would not have loved, Aṅgulimālya would not have hated, Uruvilva Kāśyapas would not have been ignorant, and the proud Brahman would not have looked down upon the Buddha. Here the argument of the Sarvāstivādins is that a pure body would not give rise to worldly passions such as hatred, love or ignorance, but since the physical body of the Buddha had been the source of these emotions, it was not pure. When they were asked to explain the Mahāsāṃghika quotations from the *sūtras*, the Sarvāstivādins interpreted them differently.

The Sarvāstivādins interpreted the first quotation of the Mahāsāṃghikas arguing that the *sūtras* refer to the *dharmakāya*. ‘The Tathāgata was born and abided in the world’ means the *rūpakāya* appearing in the world, ‘but not being defiled by the world’ means the pure *dharmakāya*. With regard to the second point of the Mahāsāṃghikas, the Sarvāstivādins explained that although the Buddha eradicated all the *kleśas*, the *rūpakāya* could still cause *kleśas* in others and hence it is impure. Concerning the third point, the Sarvāstivādins explained that the phrase ‘the body being cultivated’ is said in relation to the practice opposing physical defilement (*rūpa kleśa*). When the body is cultivated, the practitioner enters the path and progresses uninterruptedly until liberation.<sup>14</sup> Thus the disagreement between the Sarvāstivādins and the Mahāsāṃghikas about the Buddha’s physical body is based essentially on the transcendental qualities of the *rūpakāya* attributed to the Buddha by the Mahāsāṃghikas.

The disagreement on Buddhology between the Mahāsāṃghikas and the Sarvāstivādins is also reflected in their debates on the Buddhist refuge. According to the *Vibhāṣā*, “some people (or schools) say that to take refuge in the Buddha is to take refuge in the physical body of the Tathāgata, which constitutes head, neck, stomach, back, hands and feet.”<sup>15</sup> Although the text does not provide the name of the school,

according to the \**Abhidharmanyāyānusārasāstra* of Saṅghabhadra, it was the Mahāsāṃghikas. Saṅghabhadra stated: “The Mahāsāṃghikas again said thus: all the *dharmas* in the body of the Tathāgata are pure and are the place for refuge because the *sūtras* say that the body (of the Buddha) is trained or cultivated (*bhāvanā*).”<sup>16</sup> The Sarvāstivādins argued that the physical body of the Tathāgata born of parents is not pure, and hence not an object of refuge. Instead, the *dharmakāya* that consists of the Buddha’s fully accomplished qualities (*asaikṣa-dharma*) is the object of refuge. So the basic argument of the two schools still concerns the qualities of the Buddha’s physical body.

In his work entitled the *Origin and Doctrines of Early Indian Buddhist Schools*, Vasumitra provides us with more information on the different views of the two schools concerning the transcendental qualities of the Buddha.<sup>17</sup> According to Vasumitra, the Mahāsāṃghikas and their sub-schools such as the Lokottaravāda attributed to the Buddha the following transcendental qualities. The Buddha is always in *samādhi* and always speaks the Dharma with one voice in conformity with the truth. He neither sleeps nor dreams. His life span, his physical body and his powers are limitless. In disagreement with the Mahāsāṃghikas, the Sarvāstivādins maintained that not all the speeches of the Tathāgata proclaim the Dharma, the Buddha also uttered words that are not in conformity with the truth. Not all the *sūtras* delivered by the Buddha are perfect, for the Buddha himself had said that there were certain imperfect *sūtras*. The Buddha also could not expound all doctrines with a single utterance.<sup>18</sup> The Sarvāstivādins again stated in the *Vibhāṣā* that the Buddha also slept, but had no dreams. It is evident from these statements that the two schools had diverse views on the qualities of the Buddha. The Mahāsāṃghikas believed in a transcendental (*lokottara*) Buddha both physically and mentally pure and without any worldly defilement. However, the Sarvāstivādins did not agree with them and held a modified view. They distinguished between the attainments of the Buddha, which are the pure *dharmakāya*, and his physical body born of parents, which is subject to old

age, illness, death and other worldly conditions.

The Sarvāstivāda concept of the Buddha met with challenges from other schools, primarily from the Mahāsāṃghikas. In an attempt to maintain and strengthen their doctrinal position on the concept of the Buddha, the Sarvāstivādins found further support in the *Nikāyas*. This consisted of the eight kinds of wind which are mentioned four times in the *Vibhāṣā* in connection with the body of the Buddha.<sup>19</sup> The eight kinds of wind are (1) gain and (2) loss, (3) praise and (4) ridicule, (5) eulogy and (6) defamation, (7) joy and (8) sorrow. The Sarvāstivādins asserted that sentient beings go after the eight kinds of wind and the eight kinds of wind go after sentient beings. The Tathāgata did not pursue the eight kinds of wind, as he was not attached to any of them, although the eight kinds of wind did pursue the Tathāgata. The Tathāgata was not defiled by the worldly *dharmas*. However, the opposing party, most likely the Mahāsāṃghikas, pointed out many problematic incidents in the life of Gautama Buddha. Such episodes included those of Devadatta and the Buddha's return with an empty bowl, to indicate that the Buddha, in fact, was also affected by the eight kinds of wind.<sup>20</sup> The Sarvāstivādins disputed that the Buddha neither became delighted, attached to, happy or high spirited when he encountered the beneficial winds such as gain, nor was he worried, hateful, angry or low spirited when confronted with the detrimental winds such as defamation. He was not defiled by the world because he did not become attached to any of the eight kinds of wind, but not because his physical body was pure and without defilement.<sup>21</sup> However, the opposing schools were not convinced by their arguments on the problematic incidents in the life of the Buddha, such as his return from the Brahman village with an empty bowl and the slander by Ciñcamānavikā.

Eventually the debate between the Sarvāstivādins and the Mahāsāṃghikas on the Buddha's *rūpakāya* began to focus on the problematic incidents in the life of the Buddha. These incidents were actually the manifestations of what some deemed to be the bad *karma* of the Buddha. This was later classified into a group with ten

subdivisions, with all probability by the Sarvāstivādins.

### 3. The Buddha's Bad Karma

The bad *karma* of the Buddha is more than probably an important historical issue concerning the concept of the Buddha because it is found in all the three existing Buddhist traditions: Theravāda, Mahāyāna, and Vajrayana. In the Pāli canon, the Buddha's unskillful (*kuśala*) deeds are recorded in the *Pubbakammapiḷoti* of the *Apadāna* and also referred to in the *Milindapañha*.<sup>22</sup> In the Chinese *Tripitaka*, they are found in ten different texts,<sup>23</sup> while in the Tibetan canon there are at least five texts which to some extent address this matter.<sup>24</sup>

The Buddha's bad *karma* refers to ten problematic incidents that happened in the life of the historical Buddha. They fall into three categories: slander from enemies, assaults from enemies and physical illness. It was probably the Sarvāstivādins who attributed different stories to each of the ten incidents and explained them as the remaining effect of *karma* performed in the previous lives of the Buddha. The following is a summary of the ten bad *karmas* according to four main texts in which the full stories are given. These include the *Pubbakammapiḷoti*, the *\*Pañcaśatasthavirāvadāna*, the *\*Bhaiṣajyavastu* of the *\*Mūlasarvāstivāda-Vinaya* and the *Xingqixingjing*.<sup>25</sup>

(1) It is the remaining effect of the bad *karma* of his slandering an innocent Pratyekabuddha in a former life that the Buddha suffered the slanderous accusation of Sundarī.

(2) It is the remaining effect of the bad *karma* of his slandering a bhikṣu of six psychical powers in a previous life out of jealousy, that the Buddha suffered the slander of Ciñcamānavikā.

(3) It is the remaining effect of the bad *karma* of his wrong accusation of the sage Isigana of unchastity as a Brahmin teacher together with his five hundred pupils in a previous life, that the Buddha and his five hundred disciples all suffered slander when

Sundarī was murdered.<sup>26</sup>

(4) It is the remaining effect of the bad *karma* of the Buddha murdering his brother for wealth in a former birth, that Devadatta threw a boulder at him and a splinter wounded his foot.

(5) It is the remaining effect of the bad *karma* of his feeling of joyfulness upon seeing fish being killed in a previous life that the Buddha suffered a headache when Vidudabha killed his kinsmen.

(6) It is the remaining effect of the bad *karma* of his cursing the disciples of Buddha Vipasyin saying, “These bald headed *śrāmaṇas* should be offered coarse barley” that the Buddha ate horse barley for three months.

(7) It is the remaining effect of the bad *karma* of his killing a visiting wrestler in a match, as a wrestler of a king in a former life, that the Buddha suffered backaches.

(8) It is the remaining effect of the bad *karma* of his administering a wrong purge to the son of a respectable man as a physician in a former life that the Buddha suffered stomach troubles.

(9) It is the remaining effect of the bad *karma* of his reviling Buddha Kāśyapa by saying, “Bald headed *śrāmaṇas*, enlightenment is difficult to obtain” as a Brahman named Jotipāla in a former life, that the Buddha performed six years of severe austerities.

(10) It is the remaining effect of the bad *karma* of his knocking over the bowl of a Pratyekabuddha in a previous life out of hatred that the Buddha returned with an empty bowl from a Brahman village. This is not mentioned in the Theravāda *Pubbakammapiḷoti*.

The three Chinese texts also mention another bad *karmic* occurrence in addition to the above ten, but this one is late in origin since it is not mentioned in the *Nikāyas* and the *Āgamas*, nor indeed in the *Pubbakammapiḷoti*. It reads thus: “In a previous life, the Buddha killed a merchant during a voyage in order to save others. As a result, he suffered in a hell realm for a substantial amount of time and as a remaining effect

of that bad *karma* he suffered from the wooden thorn (*khadira*).”

Except for the *Pubbakammapiḷoti*, which divides the incident of Devadatta into four and makes the number of bad *karmas* twelve, all the other three texts mention ten deeds.<sup>27</sup> The stories attributed to the ten incidents in all these texts are almost exactly the same and even the names of people concerned are quite similar except for certain negligible details. This suggests that these ten bad *karmas* originally derived from one common tradition. There is a strong case to think that these events were collected by the Sarvāstivādains in order to support their concept of a human Buddha. Textual evidence lends support to this conjecture.

The texts narrating the bad *karma* of the Buddha can be divided into two groups: those accepting them as facts and those rejecting the whole matter. The first group possibly belongs to the Sarvāstivāda School or is at least associated with it, as the theme of these texts is in conformity with their concept of the Buddha that as a human being, he had bad *karma* in his previous lives. The second group presumably belongs to the Mahāsāṃghikas, or Mahāsāṃghika-Mahāyāna, since these texts are in agreement with their concept of the Buddha. To them the Buddha is transcendental and above our empirical world, and as such, is not affected by any bad *karma*.

First, let us discuss the group of texts which accept the bad *karma* of the Buddha. They are five altogether: the *Pubbakammapiḷoti* of the Pāli *Apadāna*, the *Milindapañha*, the \**Pañcaśatasthavirāvadāna*,<sup>28</sup> the *Xingqixingjing*,<sup>29</sup> and the \**Bhaiṣajyavastu* of the \**Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya*.<sup>30</sup> The last survives in both Chinese and Tibetan translations.

The earliest record of the Buddha's bad *karma* is perhaps to be found in two texts: the Chinese translation of the \**Pañcaśatasthavirāvadāna* and the *Pubbakammapiḷoti*. The \**Pañcaśatasthavirāvadāna* and the Pāli *Apadāna* in which the *Pubbakammapiḷoti* is found are similar yet not identical as pointed out by Lamotte.<sup>31</sup> These two texts record only the bad *karma* of the Buddha while good *karma* is not mentioned. The only difference is that the bad *karma* of the Buddha is



mentioned at the end of the \**Pañcaśatasthavirāvadāna* while the *Pubbakammapiḷoti* is at the beginning of the Pāli *Apadāna*.

The \**Pañcaśatasthavirāvadāna* mentions an invitation extended by the Nāga king to the Buddha and his five hundred elder disciples to have a meal by Lake Anavatapta (Pāli *Anotatta*). It was after this meal that each of the Buddha's disciples described his deeds in former existences in verse. In fact, not all of them spoke, as only thirty accounts were recorded. The Buddha's speech was entirely on his unskilful deeds, and there is no mention of any good *karma* at all.<sup>32</sup> The form of the Buddha's speech is straightforward and very brief.

The *Pubbakammapiḷoti*, following the same pattern, portrays the disclosure made by the Buddha to the community of monks at Lake Anotatta.<sup>33</sup> This text also relates *only* the Buddha's bad *karma* and makes no mention of good *karma* at all. The form of this text, according to Walter, is the same as that of the *Pañcaśatasthavirāvadāna*, straightforward and brief.<sup>34</sup> Heinz Bechert is of the opinion that the Pāli *Apadāna* in which the *Pubbakammapiḷoti* is found, is derived from a recension of the *Anavataptagāthā*, which is part of the *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya* in Tibetan translation.<sup>35</sup> This strongly suggests that the two texts came from one common tradition. Most likely this was the Sthaviravāda to which the Sarvāstivāda belonged and from the latter the sub-sect of the Mūlasarvāstivāda inherited their Vinaya.<sup>36</sup> The Sarvāstivādins were perhaps the first to have collected all the bad *karmas* of the Buddha and compiled them together in order to support their teaching that the Buddha was fundamentally a human being. This was then transmitted on to its sub-sect and it also influenced other Hīnayāna schools.

The *Pubbakammapiḷoti* is the only text in the Theravāda tradition that deals solely with the bad *karma* of the Buddha and its unpleasant results. Otherwise the *Apadāna* is devoted exclusively to good *karma*. In fact, much of the Pāli canonical literature, especially the *Jātaka*, devotes itself to the previous good *karma* of the Buddha. Walter, therefore, thinks that the author of the *Pubbakammapiḷoti* may have

drawn his account from a non-Theravāda school of the “Hīnayāna”.<sup>37</sup> If it is the case, this Hīnayāna school is none other than the Sarvāstivāda. The *Divyāvadāna* of the Sarvāstivāda, according to Walter, provides us with more supporting information on this issue. The text uses the Sanskrit equivalent term *karmaploti* quite often, usually in a stereotypical phrase by which hungry ghosts (*pretas*) enquire of the Buddha the cause of their fate, asking “what is this strand of *karma*?”<sup>38</sup> It is particularly important to note that the *Divyāvadāna*, in one place, specifically states that “the previous strands of *karma* have been disclosed at the Great Lake Anavatapta [by the Buddha who was] with the disciples.”<sup>39</sup> So the Sarvāstivādins knew not only the term *karmaploti*, but also the actual context of the discourse made by the Buddha.

Walter also thinks that there is a second possibility that the tradition concerning the bad *karma* may have been constructed by the Mahāsāṃghika since the *Mahāvastu-avadāna* narrates a detailed story about the Buddha being slandered by a woman.<sup>40</sup> This is explained as a karmic effect of his former unskilful deed of slandering a disciple of Buddha Sarvābhibhu. However, this possibility can be ruled out because the *Mahāvastu* probably did not originally belong to the Lokottaravāda branch, but to another Sthaviravāda School. The reason for this assertion is that scholars like N. Dutt are of the opinion that, over the course of time, the *Mahāvastu* had been revised by the Lokottaravādins by adding introductory chapters.<sup>41</sup> This is highly possible because many texts have been revised and enlarged by different schools over the course of time in order to support their teachings. The *\*Abhiniṣkramaṇasūtra*, as we have discussed in the second chapter, is a good example to illustrate this point. The text is given different titles by different schools according to their own doctrine. At the end of the text it is said that the Mahāsāṃghikas named it the *Great Matter (Mahāvastu)*; the Sarvāstivādins called it the *Great Adornment (Mahāvvyūha or Lalitavistara)*; the Kāśyapiyas entitled it the *Buddha’s Former Nidāna or Avadāna*; the Dharmaguptakas called it *Śākyamuni’s Former Practice (Buddhacarita)* and the Mahīśāsakas named it the *Root of Vinayaṭṭaka*

(*Vinayaṭṭakamūla*).<sup>42</sup>

The assertion that the collection of the bad *karma* of the Buddha belongs to the Sarvāstivāda is further supported by the *\*Bhaiṣajyavastu* of the *\*Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya*. The entire story of the Chinese version of the *\*Pañcaśatasthavirāvadāna* is found in the *\*Bhaiṣajyavastu* from the sixteenth to eighteenth fascicules where the content is the same but with some additional information.<sup>43</sup> In this text the number of discourses made by the elders is not thirty but thirty-five. In contrast to the disciples' discourses, which are all in verse, the Buddha's discourse, placed at the end as it is in the *\*Pañcaśatasthavirāvadāna*, is entirely in prose and contains detailed stories. Since this text belongs to the Mūlasarvāstivāda, it must have been shared with the Sarvāstivāda. If this supposition is true, the *\*Pañcaśatasthavirāvadāna* must belong to, or is at least connected with, the Sarvāstivāda.

The *Xingqixingjing*, the latest one in the group of texts that accepts the bad *karma* of the Buddha, probably also belongs to the Sarvāstivāda. This *sūtra* has only ten stories devoted to the ten problematic incidents of bad *karma*. The versified introduction of this *sūtra* informs us that it was preached at Lake Anavatapta at the request of Śāriputra who asked the Buddha why he suffered the ten bad *karmas* such as the slander of Sundarī. The ten stories that followed are all independent works, and each story consists of two parts: the prose and the verse section. The latter reiterates what is said in the prose section.<sup>44</sup> The ten stories are quite similar to the stories found in both the *\*Pañcaśatasthavirāvadāna* and the *\*Bhaiṣajyavastu* of the *\*Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya*. It seems that the author of the *Xingqixingjing* compiled his material from the above two texts. The verse section was compiled from the *\*Pañcaśatasthavirāvadāna* and the prose section from the *\*Bhaiṣajyavastu*. These were combined into one single work. This is particularly true with regard to the verse section.

A comparative study of the verses in both the *\*Pañcaśatasthavirāvadāna* and the *Xingqixingjing* shows that the author of the latter has simply copied the verses from

the former. For our purposes it will be adequate to give two typical examples, the stories of Sundarī and Devadatta, to illustrate how similar the verses are in the two texts.

Table VII: The verses on bad *karma*

The * <i>Pañcaśatasthavirāvadāna</i>	The <i>Xingqixingjing</i>
	Sundarī's slander
In a former life I was a man named Wenluo, Who slandered an innocent pratyekabuddha. People came and tied the wonderful sage, With shackles and chains (the sage) walked slowly like a dying prisoner. On seeing this <i>śrāmaṇa</i> who suffered from the chains, I took pity on him and freed him (by offering) myself (to the authority). Because of this <i>karma</i> , (I) suffered in hell for a long time, After being born in the human world I was often slandered by people. A remaining effect of that <i>karma</i> was the slander by the heretic Sundarī in my last life.	Formerly, I was named Pure-eye, an actor to cheer others, A pratyekabuddha named Delight-in-Emptiness suffered without a cause. <sup>45</sup> (This man) of pure conduct was harassed by people, Abused and chained he was to be banished from the city. On seeing the pratyekabuddha being chained and abused, I took pity and caused him to be freed. Because of this <i>karma</i> , (I) suffered in hell for a long time, A remaining effect of that <i>karma</i> was the slander today. Now this is my last birth in this world, (I) suffered slander from Sundarī.  The <i>karma</i> is not to be got rid of or be thrown into space, The three <i>karmas</i> should be taken care of and never be transgressed. I myself became the Buddha, the hero of the three <i>dhātus</i> , And spoke of my past <i>karma</i> at Lake Anavatapta.
	Devadatta
(I) fought for wealth with (one of) my three brothers in a former life, Pushed him down to a valley and killed him with a rock. Because of this criminal act (I) fell into the hell of Taishan, Suffered from poison and severe burning and heat. A remaining effect of this <i>karma</i> was that Devadatta threw a boulder at me, The boulder fell down and injured the Buddha's toe.	I killed my half-brother for wealth in a former life, Pushed him down from a cliff and threw a rock at him. Because of this <i>karma</i> (I) suffered in hell for a long time, In hell (I) was buried in the iron mountain. A remaining effect of this <i>karma</i> was that Devadatta threw a boulder at me, A fallen splinter injured (my) foot cutting the big toe. The <i>karma</i> is not to be got rid of or be thrown into space,

	<p>The three <i>karma</i> should be taken care of and never be committed with body, mouth or mind.          Now I became the Buddha, the hero of the three <i>dhātus</i>,          And spoke my past <i>karma</i> at Lake Anavatapta.</p>
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It is clear from the above comparison of the two incidents that the verses in both texts are almost identical except for some minor differences. This is largely because the two texts were translated by two different translators at different times. The last four lines, which are repeated in all the ten stories in the same manner, are probably an addition by the compiler of the *Xingqixingjing*. One possible conclusion to be drawn from this comparison is that the *Xingqixingjing*, which is the latest and the most developed account of the Buddha's bad *karma*, also belongs to the Sarvāstivāda. If our conclusion is correct, the theory about the Buddha's bad *karma* most probably belongs to the Sarvāstivādins of a very early period because the *Xingqixingjing* was translated into Chinese by Kang Mengxiang in 207 CE.

Our analysis of the texts, which accept the Buddha's bad *karma*, strongly suggests that they came from one tradition, which arguably originated from the Sarvāstivāda School. They collected the bad *karma* not so much for the purpose of supporting the doctrine of their concept of the Buddha, but to refute the concept of the transcendental Buddha of the Mahāsāṃghikas. Initially, the bad *karma* may have been just a rough collection of the problematic incidents in the life of the Buddha. This collection was later added to the last part of the *\*Pañcaśatasthavirāvadāna*, which was then incorporated in its entirety into the *\*Bhaiṣajyavastu* of the *\*Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya* with further additions. This *\*Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya* was then translated into both Chinese and Tibetan. The last stage of development of this theory was the *Xingqixingjing*, which was compiled by collecting the verses from the *\*Pañcaśatasthavirāvadāna* and the prose from the *\*Bhaiṣajyavastu*. On the other hand, the Theravāda, influenced by the Sarvāstivāda, added it to the *Apadāna* and it

was referred to in the *Milindapañha*.

The second group of texts rejects the whole idea of the bad *karma* and considers it as a skilful means (*upāyakauśalya*) of the Buddha to save sentient beings. This group apparently belongs to, or at least expounds the doctrine of the Mahāsāṃghika. The texts include: (1) the *\*Lokānuvartanasūtra* which survives in both Chinese and Tibetan translations, (2) the *Pusaxingwushiyuanshengjing*, which survives only in Chinese translation, (3) the *\*Upāyakauśalyasūtra*, which survives in three Chinese and two Tibetan translations, (4) the *\*Mahāyānadaśadharmakasūtra*, which survives in two Chinese translations, (5) the *\*Tathāgatapratibimbapraṭiṣṭhānusaṃsāsūtra*, which survives in three Chinese and one Tibetan translations, (6) the *\*Mahāprajñāpāramitāsāstra* attributed to Nāgārjuna, and (7) the *\*Mahāyānāvātārakaśāstra* of Sthiramati.

The *\*Lokānuvartanasūtra* begins with Mañjuśrī asking the Buddha to expound the *upāyakauśalya*.<sup>46</sup> Then the discourse proceeds to describe each of the major events of the Buddha's life, including his day-to-day activities and his preaching, with the intention to reinforce the idea that the Buddha's appearance in this world is nothing but a deliberate manifestation. In this text it is held that the true nature of the Buddha is beyond the empirical world, supramundane and transcendent (*lokottara*). The text refers to three of the ten incidents of bad *karma*: six years of austerities, illness and the return with an empty bowl. All these events are interpreted not as the remaining effects of bad *karma*, but as skillful means of the Buddha for the benefit of sentient beings.<sup>47</sup> The text states specifically that all *karmas* of the Buddha are nothing but a display. "Whatever good or bad *karma* the Buddha performed in previous lives would have retribution in later lives. The Buddha showed people that whatever deed one performs would have consequences. It is in conformity with the ways of the world that he makes such a show."<sup>48</sup> The text further states that the bad *karma* is nothing but a show. "The Buddha eliminated all evil deeds and had only merits, but he made a display as if enduring a remaining effect of bad *karma*. It is in

conformity with the ways of the world that he made such a display.”<sup>49</sup> Here it seems that the text reacts to and also rejects the Sarvāstivāda view that the Buddha genuinely suffered the remaining effect of the bad *karma*.

According to scholars who have made comparative studies on the \**Lokāmuṃvartanasūtra* and the relevant part of the *Mahāvastu* of the Lokottaravāda, the \**Lokāmuṃvartanasūtra* also belongs to the Lokottaravāda.<sup>50</sup> However, as Bareau claims, ideas of this kind were by no means exclusive to a particular sub-sect of the Mahāsāṃghikas known as the Lokottaravāda (to whom the *Mahāvastu* belongs), but were the common property of the Mahāsāṃghikas in general.<sup>51</sup> This assertion is also supported by the same standpoint on the concept of the Buddha found in both the \**Lokāmuṃvartanasūtra* of the Mahāsāṃghika and Vasumitra’s treatise named the *Origin and Doctrines of Early Indian Buddhist Schools*.<sup>52</sup>

(1) According to Vasumitra, the Mahāsāṃghika and its sub-sects such as the Lokottaravāda, maintained that “the divine power of the Tathāgata is limitless”.<sup>53</sup> The *Lokāmuṃvartana* defines the strength or power of the Buddha in four ways and also states that the power of the Buddha is immeasurable.

“The strength of the Buddha cannot be resisted, one finger (of the Buddha) can shake the Buddha lands of the ten directions. But he makes a show of a feeble and exhausted man. It is in conformity with the ways of the world that he makes such a show.”<sup>54</sup>

“The physical strength of the Buddha is immeasurable. Although he never has to sit, rise, stand, walk, lie down or go out, he makes a show of a man who sits, rises, stands, walks, lies down and goes out. It is in conformity with the ways of the world that he makes such a show.”<sup>55</sup>

“The strength of the Buddha is never exhausted, it is immeasurable and incomparable. But he makes a show of a man who grows decrepit with old age and needs help from people. It is in conformity with the ways of the world that he makes such a show.”<sup>56</sup>

“The wisdom, merits and power of the Buddha are immeasurable. The Buddha makes a show of a man of short life span and lets people know (the works of *karma*). It is in conformity with the ways of the world that he makes such a show.”<sup>57</sup>

(2) According to Vasumitra, the Mahāsāṃghikas assert that “the Buddha is always in *samādhi*”.<sup>58</sup> The *\*Lokānuvartana* also states that the Buddha is always in *samādhi* in three ways.

First, “The sound of the thunderbolts of the ten directions in combination cannot move even one hair of the Buddha, but he makes a show of having to be in a quiet place in order to enter into *samādhi*. It is in conformity with the ways of the world that he makes such a show.”<sup>59</sup>

Second, “The Buddha is always in *samādhi* even if he ponders on (such things as) essence and appearance, nihilism and externalism. He only makes a show of a man expounding various kinds of dharma. It is in conformity with the ways of the world that he makes such a show.”<sup>60</sup>

Third, “All Buddhas are free from worry and are always in *samādhi*, but they make a show of thinking. It is in conformity with the ways of the world that such a show is made.”<sup>61</sup>

(3) According to Vasumitra, the Mahāsāṃghikas state: “the length of lifespan of the Buddha is limitless”.<sup>62</sup> The *\*Lokānuvartana* also maintains that “the body of the Buddha never grows old and feeble but is full of merits. He makes a show of growing old and feeble and it is in conformity with the ways of the world that he makes such a show.”<sup>63</sup>

So even from the doctrinal concept of the Buddha, the *\*Lokānuvartana* also teaches the doctrine of the Mahāsāṃghikas as expressed in Vasumitra’s treatise.

The *Pusaxingwushiyuanshengjing* [Sūtra spoken by the Buddha on (the characteristic marks of) his appearance as (the result of) fifty causes of the practice of bodhisattva] is somewhat similar to the *\*Lokānuvartana*. It starts with the Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī requesting the Buddha to expound the causes and conditions as to why the



Tathāgata was endowed with thirty-two major and eighty minor marks. Then the text describes fifty virtues of the Buddha as the causes for the two types of attributes. For instance, “the Bodhisattva in his past lives has never destroyed people’s houses, but was rather delighted in building houses. For this reason, the Buddha had the strength of Vajras (gods) and was like the mountains of the four directions, and no one could harm the body of the Buddha.”<sup>64</sup> The text describes the body of the Buddha as free from any unpleasant scent or blemish, and that no bad *karma* reaches the body of the Buddha. Moreover, flies, bees, fleas, and other insects are unable to approach the body of the Buddha, which emits an incomparable beam of light. The Buddha does not feel weather extremes, and is not hungry even without food or drink. This *sūtra* expounds the same concept of the Buddha as the Mahāsāṃghikas and rejects the idea of the Buddha’s bad *karma*.

The full title of the \**Upāyakauśalyasūtra*, according to Paul Harrison, is \**Sarva-buddha-mahā-rahasya-upāya-kauśalya-jñānottara-bodhisattva-paripṛcchā-parivarta-nāma-mahāyāna-sūtra*.<sup>65</sup> This *sūtra* clearly belongs to the Mahāyāna because at the end, it states that this teaching of *upāyakauśalya* is not to be taught to inferior individuals of little merit, or to the *śrāvakas* and *pratyekabuddhas*. The reason is that such people have not mastered *upāyakauśalya*, and that only the Bodhisattva-Mahāsattvas are able to understand this profound teaching.<sup>66</sup> The author refers to the followers of Hīnayāna schools as a whole by the terms *śrāvaka* and *pratyekabuddha* in contrast to Mahāyānist bodhisattvas. The text also mentions the term ‘Mahāyāna’ three times.<sup>67</sup> Taking all these factors into account, there is little doubt the text belongs to the Mahāyāna. As Paul Harrison points out, the Mahāyāna was a pan-Buddhist movement or a loose set of movements. The Mahāyānists were members of a *nikāya*, but not all members of a *nikāya* were Mahāyānists.<sup>68</sup> So the author of the \**Upāyakauśalyasūtra* was probably a follower of the Mahāsāṃghika and also an adherent of the Mahāyāna.

The *sūtra* has a similar format to that of the \**Lokānuvartana*, beginning with the

bodhisattva Huishang (Superior Wisdom) requesting the Buddha to expound *upāyakauśalya*.<sup>69</sup> After an account of the Buddha's sixfold explanation, the text describes each of the major events of the Buddha's life from his descent from Tuṣita up to his enlightenment. Thereafter the text deals with the Buddha's bad *karma* to demonstrate that all these events were part of deliberate skilful means (*upāyakauśalya*). All ten problematic incidents of the Buddha's bad *karma* in this *sūtra* are described as skilful means employed for the sake of sentient beings. They served the purpose of illustrating that all actions would bring about consequences. In two places the text mentions specifically that the ten problematic events in the life of the Buddha are not the remaining effects of his bad *karma* but only demonstrations.

“The Buddha told Huishang: ‘The remaining effects of bad *karma* manifested by the Tathāgata are ten, and they are all *upāyakauśalya* of the World Honoured One. It should be known that it is wrong to say that the Buddha sat at the foot of the *bodhi* tree and attained enlightenment, that the Tathāgata has an iota of blemish or any shortcomings; and it is wrong to say the Tathāgata has not planted the root of goodness or has not completed the (bodhisattva) practice. It is so because (the Buddha) has only the white *dharmas* and no blemish at all. Sons of good families, the Tathāgata has eliminated all unwholesome *dharmas*, how can the World Honoured One suffer any remaining effects of bad *karma*?’”<sup>70</sup>

This, of course, is an argument brought forward by the compiler, namely that the Buddha would not be a Buddha if he had *any* bad *karma*. The Buddha is named Tathāgata because he possesses good deeds and wholesome *karmas* only.

Then at the end of the *sūtra*, it states: “In summary, the remaining effects of the bad *karma* manifested by the Tathāgata are ten, and they should be known as the Buddha's *upāyakauśalya*. The Buddha made a display to demonstrate that there is a consequence to every action. This is for the sake of the common people who have bad thoughts and revere non-dharma, it is not because the Buddha had any bad *karma*.”<sup>71</sup>

All evidence suggests that the compiler of the \**Upāyakauśalyasūtra* was

informed of the debate between the Sarvāstivāda and the Mahāsāṃghika on the bad *karma* of the Buddha. The compiler must have been a follower of the Mahāsāṃghika and composed this *sūtra* on the basis of the belief of his school. His intention was either to refute the Sarvāstivāda theory on the concept of the Buddha or at least to present its Mahāsāṃghika interpretation.

The *\*Mahāyānadaśadharmakasūtra*, clearly Mahāyānist, also mentions the ten incidents and explains them as the secret teaching of the Buddha.<sup>72</sup> Thus it states: “How do Bodhisattva Mahāsattvas understand the Tathāgata’s cryptic words? Bodhisattva Mahāsattvas are skilled in understanding exactly the deep and secret meaning hidden in the *sūtra*.”<sup>73</sup> The text goes on to discuss the bad *karmas* individually through questions and answers. At the end of each discussion, it asserts that it is incorrect to say that the Buddha suffered retribution of bad *karma*. The Buddha manifested them only for the sake and sympathy of the future generations of sentient beings. This *sūtra* considers the bad *karma* as the cryptic words of the Buddha used for the welfare of sentient beings. Thus, the *\*Mahāyānadaśadharmakasūtra* also teaches the same doctrine as the Mahāsāṃghikas on the concept of the Buddha.

The *\*Tathāgatapratibimbapraṭiṣṭhānusamsāsūtra* is a Mahāyāna text that praises the immense merit of making Buddha images.<sup>74</sup> One such merit referred to in the text is being free from the retributions of bad *karma*. Then, a question arises in the text on whether the Buddha himself had made any image in the past. The Buddha had after all encountered many unpleasant events in his life such as the Devadatta incident and his illness.<sup>75</sup> The *sūtra* answers this question by saying that the Buddha did make images in the past and he did not suffer from the remaining effect of any bad *karma*. Had this not been the case, the Buddha would not have expounded this *sūtra*. The *sūtra* states that the Tathāgata has an eternal body, the *dharmakāya*, which is free from *any* bad *karma*, and that those incidents were only demonstrations manifested for the sake of sentient beings.

The *Mahāprajñāpāramitāsāstra* (MPPŚ) mentions the bad *karma* when discussing the power and light of the Buddha.<sup>76</sup> The MPPŚ asks: “If the power of the Buddha is limitless and his merit is immeasurable, how could the Buddha have suffered from the retribution of nine bad *karma*?”<sup>77</sup> The text, in fact, lists eleven problematic incidents. Apart from the ten mentioned above, it adds that “the Buddha suffered from fever and Ānanda fanned him from behind.”<sup>78</sup> The MPPŚ answers this question by referring to the two-body theory formulated by the Sarvāstivādins. The *sāstra* explains that the Buddha has two bodies: the *dharmakāya* and the *rūpakāya*. The *dharmakāya* is the true body which pervades the ten quarters of space. Its form is serene, its features are majestic, it is infinitely radiant, and endowed with infinite speech enunciated to save sentient beings of the ten directions. The *rūpakāya* is the manifestation of the *dharmakāya* as it presents the Dharma to living beings such as humans. Therefore, though the Buddha appeared to suffer backache, stomach troubles and other problems, they were nothing but the skilful means (*upāyakaśalya*) of the Buddha. The real body of the Buddha, in fact, is perfect and without any illness because the Buddha had already eliminated *all* bad *karma*. He had also completed the *kuśaladharmas* when he attained enlightenment. It was for the sake of the community of monks that the Buddha made such displays, perhaps in order for the monks to receive proper treatment in the event of illness. In the same text it is again argued that Anuruddha gained the miraculous power of obtaining food by one thought due to the fact that he offered food to a *pratyekabuddha*. The Buddha offered his flesh to sentient beings for many lifetimes, thus he possessed a great heap of merit, and hence he did not suffer from hunger. It was only an altruistic display that caused his return with an empty bowl. The author of the text quotes the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśasūtra* where it is said that Vimalakīrti told Ānanda that the Buddha only made a display of having illness. However, there is no such story in the existent *Vimalakīrtinirdeśasūtra* in Chinese translation. The author perhaps quotes from a different version of the *sūtra*.

The *sāstra* refutes explicitly the assertion of the Sarvāstivādins that the Buddha

suffered from the remaining effect of past bad *karma*. The author of the *śāstra* also knew the debate on the bad *karma* and he refuted the Sarvāstivāda position with the Buddhology characteristic of the Mahāsāṃghikas. Here we have evidence of an ancient historical debate on the concept of Buddha which lasted for several centuries.

The Chinese scholar Yinshun asserts that the author of the MPPŚ solved the problem of the bad *karma* by formulating the two-body theory.<sup>79</sup> But the *śāstra* has not really solved the problem because its author was skewed toward Mahāsāṃghika Buddhology. Even the *trikāya* theory, which in the opinion of the present writer was a result of an attempt to solve this problem, failed to resolve it for even the *trikāya* theory was formulated on the basis of Mahāsāṃghika Buddhology.<sup>80</sup> That the Sarvāstivādins never accepted the *trikāya* theory is proven by a perusal of the literature of the Sarvāstivādins yet extant. The Theravāda school, for instance, still views the historical Buddha as an excellent human being.

The last text to be examined on this issue is the \**Mahāyānāvataṛakaśāstra* of Sthiramati. In this text, it mentions some of the problematic incidents in the life of Gautama Buddha.<sup>81</sup> But the text states that it is wrong to say that the Buddha suffered the remaining effect of bad *karma*, as he had eradicated all the unskillful deeds and had immeasurable virtues. Thus, all the texts that reject outright the notion of the Buddha having bad *karma* are closely related to, or at least endorsed the doctrine of the Mahāsāṃghikas.

This analysis of texts on the Buddha's bad *karma* suggests that the debate on this matter between the Mahāsāṃghikas and the Sarvāstivādins was a serious historical issue which lasted for several centuries. The main argument always revolved round the question of the transcendental qualities and attributes of the Buddha. The Mahāsāṃghikas maintained that the Buddha was transcendental (*lokottara*) and that all bad *karmas* were displays. But the Sarvāstivādins rejected them and maintained that the Buddha did actually suffer from the remaining effects of bad *karma* because he was fundamentally a human being. From this debate, we can see the ways the early

schools disputed on the Buddha's identity and how they compiled texts to support their arguments. This suggests that many *sūtras* may have been composed and written by different schools in support of their doctrinal teachings. The problem of the Buddha's bad *karma* has led to the question of the Buddha's short lifespan with the ascendance of the Mahāyāna in the history of Buddhist thought.

#### 4. The Problem of the Buddha's Short Lifespan

The problem of the Buddha's short lifespan is reflected in many Mahāyāna *sūtras*. In *sūtras* such as the \**Saddharmapuṇḍarīka*, the \**Avataṃsaka* and the Mahāyāna *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*, a special chapter is devoted to the explanation of the issue.

The cause of the problem is the dichotomy between the Buddha's great merit (*mahāpuṇya*) and his short lifespan. The Mahāyāna developed two closely connected concepts, namely its Buddhological variant along with the bodhisattva ideal. The bodhisattva ideal stresses on the arduous training that a bodhisattva endures on his way to Buddhahood. This involves the practice of the six *pāramitās* on the ten bodhisattva stages (*bhūmi*) which take three *asaṃkhyeya kalpas* to complete.<sup>82</sup> According to Mahāyāna, a bodhisattva acquires immeasurable merit during this long period of time before the attainment of Buddhahood.<sup>83</sup> As a reward for such great merit, the Buddha enjoys a long blissful life with marvellous attributes such as limitless light. However, when the Mahāyānists applied this theory to Śākyamuni Buddha, they found that the historical Buddha lived only eighty years on earth. They found further that the Buddha encountered many unpleasant occurrences. This was indeed troubling to the Mahāyāna adepts. But the Buddha's long lifespan had already been conceived by the compilers of the early *sūtras* such as the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*. It mentions that the Buddha could have lived for a *kalpa* or to the end of the *kalpa* if he so wished, but he had deliberately given up his life at the request of Māra.<sup>84</sup> The compilers of the *sūtra* thought that the Buddha could have

lived for a *kalpa*. The Mahāsāṃghikas then built on this idea and maintained that the lifespan of the Buddha was limitless. However, Vasumitra's treatise does not offer any doctrinal support or explanation for this position. Kuiji, the commentator on Vasumitra's treatise, understood the Buddha of limitless lifespan as the *sambhogakāya*.<sup>85</sup> Kuiji was an eminent disciple of Xuanzang, the translator of Vasumitra's treatise. Thus, we may safely assume that to at least a significant extent, Kuiji was in agreement with the view of his master.

The problem of the short lifespan of Śākyamuni is mentioned in at least seven Mahāyāna texts. These include: the *\*Saddharmapuṇḍarīka*, the *\*Śūraṅgamasamādhi*, the *\*Avataṃsaka*, the *\*Suvarṇaprabhāsa-sūtra*, the *\*Tathāgatapratibimba-pratiṣṭhānusamsāsūtra*, the *Mahāprajñāpāramitāśāstra*, and the Mahāyāna *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*.

The chapter on the lifespan of the Tathāgata in the *\*Saddharmapuṇḍarīkasūtra* states clearly that the Buddha lives forever, but for the sake of sentient beings he made a display of entering into *parinirvāṇa*. "Thus, since I have attained Buddhahood, an extremely long period of time has passed. My lifespan is an immeasurable number of *asaṃkhyeya kalpas*, and during that time I have remained here constantly without ever entering *parinirvāṇa*. Good men, originally I practised the bodhisattva way, and the lifespan I acquired then has yet to come to an end, and it will last twice the number of years that have already passed. Now, however, although in fact I do not actually enter *parinirvāṇa*, I announce that I am going to adopt the course of *parinirvāṇa*. This is an expedient means which the Tathāgata uses to teach and convert living beings."<sup>86</sup> Thus according to the *\*Saddharmapuṇḍarīkasūtra*, the lifespan of the Buddha is in fact immeasurable and it is only a skilful means for the sake of sentient beings that he announced his *parinirvāṇa*.

In the *\*Śūraṅgamasamādhisūtra*, the question of Śākyamuni's lifespan is posed by the Bodhisattva Dṛdhamatī.<sup>87</sup> The Buddha told him that his lifespan is the same as that of the Buddha Vairocanaśmipratimaṇḍitavikurvaṇarāja, who lives in a universe

named Pratimaṇḍita in the Eastern region thirty-seven Buddha lands away from this Sāha universe. Then Dṛdhamati travelled to that Buddha by supernatural power to enquire about his lifespan. That Buddha replied that his lifespan was of seven hundred incalculable cosmic periods (*asaṃkhyeyakalpa*) and said: “My lifespan is exactly the same as the lifespan of the Buddha Śākyamuni.” At this point, it is stated in the text: “Then the whole assembly, on learning that the lifespan of the Buddha was so inconceivable, experienced great joy and, filled with astonishment, said to the Buddha: Bhagavat, the supernatural power of the Buddhas is astonishing and all their practices are inconceivable. Even though in this universe (the Sāha Lokadhātu), you manifest a very short lifespan, in that universe (the Pratimaṇḍita Lokadhātu), your lifespan lasts for seven hundred *asaṃkhyeyakalpas!*”<sup>88</sup> It is clear that there were followers who were unhappy about the short lifespan of Śākyamuni and this *sūtra* thus addresses the problem by an attempt to answer the question.

The chapter on the lifespan of the Buddha in the *\*Avataṃsaka* is very short.<sup>89</sup> It is said that one *kalpa* in the Sahā world, the land of Śākyamuni, is a day and night in the world of bliss, the land of Amitābha Buddha. One *kalpa* in the world of bliss is a day and night in the world of Vestment Banner, the land of the Buddha Adamant. This series goes on past a million zillion worlds. One *kalpa* in the last of these worlds is a day and night in the world of Supreme Lotus, the land of the Buddha Supreme in Goodness, which is filled with great bodhisattvas such as Samantabhadra. Although the text does not specify how long the life span of the Buddha in the world of the Supreme Lotus is, it nonetheless implies the infiniteness of his lifespan.

In the second chapter of the *\*Suvarṇaprabhāsa-sūtra*, which also deals with the lifespan of the Buddha, it is said that in the past, the bodhisattva Ruciraketu had made offerings to hundreds and thousands of Buddhas and planted the roots of virtue.<sup>90</sup> He reflected on why the lifespan of Śākyamuni Tathāgata was only eighty years. He realized that the Buddha taught two causes for long life, namely abstaining from killing and making offerings of food. And the Tathāgata practised non-killing in many



hundreds of thousands of *asaṃkhyeya kalpas*. He had also completed the ten good *dharmas* and made limitless offerings of food including his own body, bones, marrow, flesh and blood. While the bodhisattva was reflecting thus, the four Buddhas of the four directions appeared and told Ruciraketu that, in fact, the lifespan of the Buddha is limitless: “Just as the water in the sea is immeasurable, the lifespan of Śākyamuni Buddha is, like the height of the mount Sumeru, immeasurable.”<sup>91</sup> Here the author attempted to answer the question of short lifespan of Śākyamuni by resorting to legend.

The \**Tathāgatapratibimbapraṭiṣṭhānusaṃsāsūtra*, as discussed above in the third section, is a text praising the merit of making Buddha images, such as having a long life and being free from illness. In the latter half of Devaprajña’s translation, it also mentions the problem of the short lifespan of the Buddha. It is stated in the text: “At that time, in the assembly, there was a person, who had not awakened the mind of Mahāyāna, who doubted whether the Tathāgata made Buddha images in the past.<sup>92</sup> If he did, then why was his lifespan so short and full of suffering, his land full of impurities?”<sup>93</sup> The *sūtra* answers this question by saying that the Buddha possesses an eternal body, the *dharmakāya*. It is for the sake of sentient beings that he made a display of illness, not to mention attaining *nirvāṇa*. In fact, the Buddha does not have to undergo all these experiences, while he enjoys a blissful infinite lifespan abiding in a pure land.

The MPPŚ mentions the short lifespan of Śākyamuni in comparison with the past Buddhas. It is stated, “Ānanda thought that in the past, Buddhas such as Ratnapuṇḍarīka and Dīpaṃkara were all born in the world at a good time. They had immeasurable long life spans and benefited numerous sentient beings. Śākyamuni Buddha was born into the world at a bad time and had a short life span. Can he even save all his disciples?”<sup>94</sup> In another place the text also states, “The life spans of the Buddhas are different, some are long and some short. The life span of Buddha Vipaśyin was 84,000 years, Krakucchanda’s 60,000 years, Kanakamuni’s 30,000

years, Kāśyapa's 20,000 years, but the life span of Śākyamuni was less than 100 years. The lifespan of Maitreya will be 84,000 years. The light of Śākyamuni Buddha is only one *zhang* while the light of Maitreya is ten *li*.”<sup>95</sup> Why was the lifespan of Śākyamuni so short? The MPPŚ attempts to answer the question by saying that there are two kinds of lifespan and light, one is manifested and the other is concealed. The manifested form is real and limitless, and the concealed form, which is for the sake of sentient beings, is limited and measurable.<sup>96</sup> What the author has tried to express is that the actual lifespan of the Buddha is limitless and immeasurable. This consists of the manifested form, but for the sake of sentient beings the Buddha made a show of having lived for eighty years only. The latter consists of the concealed form. The *śāstra* gives four reasons why the lifespan of Śākyamuni should be limitless. (1) Saving people's lives is the cause of long life. The Buddha saved the lives of an entire village in the past. (2) Practising non-killing is the cause of long life. The Buddha practised not only non-killing, but also showed compassion for all sentient beings. (3) Bodhisattvas obtain long life through the practice of the *prajñāpāramitās* and other virtues. The Buddha has accumulated great virtues by practising them throughout many lives. (4) Among all types of lifetimes, the life of the Buddha is the foremost. On account of all these merits, the lifespan of the Buddha should be limitless, but in order to instruct sentient beings, the Buddha made a display of either long or short life spans.

The author of the MPPŚ attempted to answer the question of the Buddha's short lifespan with logical arguments drawing support from traditional belief. Mahāyānists frequently sought to reconcile paradoxes thus, as they did when introducing new ideas by compiling a new *sūtra*. The Mahāyāna *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* (MMPS) functions primarily to address this problem, as it is particularly devoted to the exposition of the idea that the Buddha is eternal. In the text, “Mahākāśyapa said, how can the Tathāgata be considered eternal granted the Buddha's statement ‘It is like the blowing out of the lamp that the fire will not be found anywhere; so is the Tathāgata when he entered

into *nirvāṇa*.”<sup>97</sup> This indicates that Mahākāśyapa as a representative of the conservative Hīnayāna schools opposed to the Mahāyānist idea of the eternity of the Buddha. Therefore, in the chapter on the diamond body, the *sūtra* states that the body of the Tathāgata is eternal because it is an indestructible diamond body, and a *dharmakāya*. It is not a defiled body sustained by food. Then Mahākāśyapa said to the Buddha, “World Honoured One, I have never seen such bodies as the Buddha described and what I have seen is only the body sustained by food which is to be decomposed into dust. Why? Because the Tathāgata will enter into (final) *nirvāṇa*.”<sup>98</sup>

There are two possible reasons underlying the appearance of Mahākāśyapa and his questions concerning the eternity of the Buddha’s body in the MMPS. First, Mahākāśyapa played an important role in the so-called Hīnayāna *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*. It was he who lit the fire of the funeral pyre and witnessed the body of the master being burnt. Mahākāśyapa was also the leader of the Saṃgha after the Buddha’s death and presided over the first Council. The compilers of the MMPS employed him as one of the main interlocutors in order to give the new *sūtra* authenticity as it bore the same title as the Hīnayāna version. A second factor, one of utter most importance in our study, consists of Mahākāśyapa’s representation of the conservative Hīnayāna schools. This is explained by his question concerning the Buddha’s entry into *nirvāṇa*, one typical of early Buddhism. The simile of lamp flame being compared to *nirvāṇa* is found even in the *Samyuttanikāya*. Mahākāśyapa’s question concerning the eternity of the Buddha most probably reflects the general attitude of the Hīnayāna schools in contrast with the Mahāyāna position when the MMPS was composed. The Sarvāstivādins, for instance, held the view that the physical body of the Buddha was subject to human conditions such as birth, old age and death as discussed in chapter two. Hīnayānists such as the Sarvāstivādins must have objected to the Mahāyānist declaration that the Buddha is eternal. Consequently, this question became one of the serious issues of debate and contention between the Mahāyāna and the Hīnayāna schools. Perhaps the former school held that there was an

urgent need to compose a *sūtra* in order to address the whole matter in an authentic way.

There were already a number of Mahāyāna *sūtras* in existence which devoted a chapter to the problem of the Buddha's lifespan. Other *sūtras* put forward arguments for the eternity of the Buddha before the composition of the MMPS, as discussed above. But the compilers or authors of the MMPS must have thought this insufficient, and they composed a *sūtra* to address this problem specifically. This is also supported by the three central themes of the MMPS: (1) The Buddha is eternal because the *dharmakāya* exists forever. (2) The *mahāparinirvāṇa* has four attributes, but eternity is the core. (3) All sentient beings including the *icchantika* (those who do not have good roots) have the *buddhadhātu* (the potential to become Buddhas). The first theme directly addresses the problem while the second functions to bolster the first. The third theme is a further development of the first two.

The second theme, as discussed in chapter four, is a reinterpretation of the concept of *nirvāṇa* found in early Buddhism. According to the MMPS, the *mahāparinirvāṇa* has the four attributes of eternity, happiness, self and purity. Among them eternity is described as being the most important.<sup>99</sup> This may be explained by the belief that pure self-nature (*svabhāva*) of all *dharmas* is *nirvāṇa* and this pure self-nature is nothing but *tathatā*. So the concept of the *mahāparinirvāṇa* means eternal quiescence and thus it is the same as the *dharmakāya*, but represents different aspect of one Buddhahood. The *mahāparinirvāṇa* is the aspect of tranquillity of Buddhahood while the *dharmakāya* is the eternal principle, the fruit of the same Buddhahood. Therefore, to say that the Buddha entered into *nirvāṇa* does not mean that the Buddha was no more, like a fire gone forever without a trace, but that the Tathāgata abides in quiescence.

The third theme is developed from the idea that the *dharmakāya* is eternal and abides in every sentient being. The *sūtra* states: "The *buddhadhātu* is the Tathāgata, the Tathāgata is the Dharma, which is eternal."<sup>100</sup> In another place the *sūtra* explains

by way of similes that the *buddhadhātu* in all sentient beings is one and eternal. It is said: “The *buddhadhātu* of all sentient beings, in the same way, is one and eternal and without change, although (sentient beings) take up different bodies in the *samsāra*.”<sup>101</sup> From the perspective of sentient beings, the Tathāgata is the *buddhadhātu*, and from the angle of Buddhahood, the Tathāgata is the *dharmakāya*. So the whole MMPS explains the idea that the Buddha is eternal.

This analysis shows that the short lifespan of Śākyamuni became a problem when Mahāyānists began to emphasise more and more the merit of the Buddha as a result of immeasurably long Bodhisattva practice. It can be seen that although the *sūtras* and the *śāstras* employed various means to resolve the problem, it remained unsolved since the fact that Śākyamuni lived on earth for only eighty years cannot be changed. However, there is not the slightest reference made to the three bodies of the Buddha in these *sūtras* and *śāstras*. It is most probably the case that they were composed before the formulation of the *trikāya* theory.

### 5. The Concept of the Buddha in the MPPŚ

The concept of the Buddha in the *Mahāprajñāpāramitāśāstra* (MPPŚ) follows fundamentally the two-body theory of the Sarvāstivāda, and its philosophical tenets are based on Mahāsāṃghika Buddhism, as already discussed in chapters two and three. The MPPŚ developed the concept of the *dharmakāya* through the expansion of the notion of the Buddha of the Mahāsāṃghikas. It also assimilated the teachings of the Mahāyāna *sūtras* such as the *\*Prajñāpāramitā* and the *\*Avataṃsaka*. According to the MPPŚ, the *dharmakāya* pervades the space of the ten directions with majestic form and limitless rays. Its voice is also limitless, always expounding the Dharma in order to save beings. The terms used for the second body in the MPPŚ are two: *nirmāṇakāya* and *rūpakāya*, representing a transitional period in the development of the *trikāya* theory. One finds that the *kāya* theory gradually leans toward the formation of a transformation body. There are eight places in the MPPŚ where the

two-body theory is mentioned. We shall review these in their entirety in order to have a comprehensive discussion on the implications of the two-body theory.

1. "The Buddha has two kinds of bodies: the body of *dharmatā* (*dharmatākāya*) and the body born of parents (*rūpakāya*). The *dharmatākāya*, which pervades the space of the ten directions, is infinite, marvellous and wonderful in form (*rūpa*), with limitless rays of light and boundless voice. The audience (which are the *dharmakāya* bodhisattvas) also pervade space and take birth in different places. They manifest themselves in various forms and under different names and save sentient beings constantly through skilful means (*upāyakauśalya*).<sup>102</sup> This *dharmatākāya* can save the beings of the worlds of the ten directions, but the *rūpakāya*, which endures the retribution of bad *karma*, preaches the Dharma in a gradual way just as human beings do. Therefore, there is no contradiction (concerning the bad *karma*) since there are two kinds of Buddhas."<sup>103</sup>

2. "There are two kinds of Buddha body: the body produced by supernatural power and the body born of parents (*rūpakāya*). The body born of parents is subject to the law of the world of men thus inferior to that of the gods. It behaves in accordance with the world of men."<sup>104</sup>

3. "The *rūpakāya* is characterized by the thirty-two marks and the *dharmakāya* is said to have no mark (*lakṣaṇa*). While the *rūpakāya* is endowed with the thirty-two major and eighty minor marks, the *dharmakāya* is endowed with the virtues of the ten powers, the four kinds of intrepidity, the four kinds of wisdom of unhindered understanding and expression (*catasraḥ pratisaṃvidahī*) and, the eighteen exclusive *dharma*s and so on."<sup>105</sup>

4. "There are two types of Buddha body: the true body and the manifested body (*nirmāṇakāya*). ... The true body pervades space with rays of light illuminating the ten directions. It always teaches the Dharma with a voice that pervades the ten directions. The living beings of numerous worlds amounting to the sands of the Ganges, listen to its teaching. ... The *dharmatākāya* presents the Dharma which is

comprehensible only to bodhisattvas in their tenth stage, and all people of the three vehicles cannot understand it.”<sup>106</sup>

5. “The Buddha has two kinds of body, the body born of *dharmatā* (*dharmatākāya*) and the manifested body (*nirmāṇakāya*) in accordance with the world. The retinue of the *nirmāṇakāya* has been discussed before, while the *dharmatākāya* has the retinue of countless bodhisattvas who have one more birth to *bodhi*. Why? It is said in the *Sūtra of the Inconceivable State of Liberation* that ‘when the Buddha was about to take birth (in the human world), eighty four thousand bodhisattvas with one more birth to *bodhi* appeared as the guiding retinue before the Bodhisattva (the Buddha) walked out. It is like the moon being surrounded by clouds.’ Again the \**Saddharmapuṇḍarīkasūtra* says, ‘All the bodhisattvas appearing from the earth are the family retinue, the great retinue, and the bodhisattva retinue.’”<sup>107</sup>

6. “There are two kinds of Buddha: the *dharmatākāya* Buddha and the manifested Buddha (*nirmāṇakāya*) that accords with the mental conditions of sentient beings. With reference to the *dharmatākāya* Buddha, it is said that upon hearing its name, one will be saved. With regard to the manifested Buddha, it is said that although there were (sentient beings) living together with the Buddha (Śākyamuni), some of them were born in hell on account of their evil *karma*. The *dharmatākāya* Buddha can do anything and fulfill every wish. Why? This is because in the countless *asaṃkhyeya kalpas* the Buddha fully accumulated all the merit (*puṇya*) and obtained unhindered knowledge (*prajñā*). Thus he became the divine Lord of sentient beings, only to be seen by the gods and great bodhisattvas.”<sup>108</sup>

7. “The Buddha has two kinds of body: the *dharmakāya* and the *rūpakāya*. The *dharmakāya* is greater because the benefit it generates is immeasurable.”<sup>109</sup>

8. “The Buddha has two kinds of body: the *dharmakāya* and the *rūpakāya*. The *dharmakāya* is the true Buddha while the *rūpakāya* exists on account of conventional truth. In relation to the marks (*lakṣaṇa*) of the *dharmakāya*, it is said that the reality of all *dharmas* does not go and does not come. For this same reason, it is said that all

Buddhas go and come from nowhere.”<sup>110</sup>

The above eight quotations show that the MPPŚ speaks of two bodies of the Buddha: the *dharmakāya* and the *nirmāṇakāya*. Although the terms used may be slightly different in various places, they denote the same things.<sup>111</sup> Concerning the *nirmāṇakāya*, the text uses two terms alternatively: *rūpakāya* and *nirmāṇakāya*, denoting the manifested body with which the Buddha helps sentient beings find liberation. There are three aspects of the *nirmāṇakāya* as described in the text. First, it is the manifested body born of parents, and subject to the law of the human world. Second, the characteristics of the *rūpakāya* are the thirty-two major and eighty minor marks, which are certainly derived from the Sarvāstivāda school. Third, the retinue or dependents of the *rūpakāya* are explained in the MPPŚ with reference to the historical Buddha. “Śākyamuni, for instance, had Chandaka as servant, Udāyin as playmate, Gautamī, Yaśodharā and other court ladies as family retinue before he renounced the world, and during the six years of austerities, he had five friends as his retinue.”<sup>112</sup> It is clear that the MPPŚ has developed the *rūpakāya* as a transformation body following the philosophical idea of the Mahāsāṃghikas while assimilating the attributes of the concept of *rūpakāya* of both the Sarvāstivādins and the Mahāsāṃghikas.

The concept of the *dharmakāya* in the MPPŚ is explained in a similar way as that of the *rūpakāya* on its nature, its characteristics and its retinue. First, concerning its nature, the *dharmakāya* is endowed with the following attributes: the ten powers, the four kinds of intrepidity, the four kinds of wisdom of unhindered understanding and expression (*catasraḥ pratisaṃvidah*), and the eighteen exclusive *dharmas*. Here, the eighteen exclusive *dharmas* are Mahāyānistic. The *dharmakāya*, according to MPPŚ, is endowed with thirty-six mental qualities in total. But, the MPPŚ says that the mark of the *dharmakāya* is no mark. The author of the *śāstra* uses the two kinds of truth in his explanation, “There are two kinds of truth with regard to the Buddhadharma: ultimate truth and conventional truth. On account of conventional truth, there are



thirty-two marks, while on account of the ultimate truth there is no mark.”<sup>113</sup> Then it is asked in the *śāstra*, “There should be special marks to each of the ten powers and the four kinds of intrepidity etc. How can it be said that the *dharmakāya* has no mark?” The author replies, “All pure *dharmas* have no mark on account of the sixteen aspects (*ṣoḍaśākārāḥ*) and the three kinds of *samādhi*, but the Buddha taught the Dharma through analysis in order to make sentient beings understand. However, all Buddhadharmas are empty (*śūnya*), possess no-mark (*animitta*) and non-contrivance (*apraṇihita*) as their characteristics. They all enter *tathatā*, *dharmatā* and reality.”<sup>114</sup> The author further states, “With respect to ultimate truth, all Buddhas are empty and they do not come and do not go. If you (Sarvāstivādins) say that the Buddha consists of the five pure aggregates, then it is empty because it is a product of causes and conditions.”<sup>115</sup> Thus, the *dharmakāya* in the MPPŚ is the true nature of all things (*dharmas*), which is empty, it has no mark and does not come and does not go. That is the true Buddha. This aspect of the concept of the *dharmakāya* in the MPPŚ has been developed on the basis of that of the \**Prajñāpāramitāsūtras*, the main theme of which is emptiness, as we have discussed in chapter four.

Second, concerning its characteristics, the *dharmakāya* is described as pervading the space of the ten directions with a majestic and marvellous form, limitless rays of light and a boundless voice. It always teaches the Dharma in order to liberate living beings, but sentient beings do not perceive the majestic form or hear the marvellous voice because they have much defilement (*kleśas*) accumulated through numerous *kalpas*.<sup>116</sup> It is only the great bodhisattvas who can see the *dharmakāya* and listen to its preaching. The *dharmakāya* of the Buddha is described in the MPPŚ as follows: “The body of the Buddha is limitless, and so are his rays of light and voice. The merits of moral discipline (*śīla*), concentration (*samādhi*) and wisdom (*prajñā*) of the Buddha are also immeasurable as it is said in the *Guhyakasūtra*.”<sup>117</sup> This means that the Buddha has a marvellous body with attributes of limitless rays of light and a boundless voice because of gathering great merit by practising the six *pāramitās* for

countless *kalpas*.<sup>118</sup> This aspect of the *dharmakāya* is clearly developed on the basis of the philosophical ideas of the true Buddha of the Mahāsāṃghikas through the assimilation of doctrinal teachings in other Mahāyāna *sūtras* such as the *Prajñāpāramitā*.

Third, concerning its retinue, the *dharmakāya* has the retinue of countless great bodhisattvas who have one more birth to *bodhi*. These great bodhisattvas are the audience listening to the preaching of the *dharmakāya* and who can comprehend the Dharma. These bodhisattvas, in turn, save sentient beings with skilful means (*upāyakauśalya*) by taking birth in different lands, under various forms with different names. According to the MPPŚ, there are two kinds of bodhisattvas: the *dharmakāya* bodhisattvas and the ordinary bodhisattvas who are born of *karma*. The *dharmakāya* bodhisattvas can manifest themselves in different forms and take birth in the world on their own will in order to save sentient beings.<sup>119</sup> The ordinary bodhisattvas take birth in the human world on account of *karma* while the *dharmakāya* bodhisattvas come from either other Buddha lands or Tusita heaven. The *dharmakāya* bodhisattvas have the merit of the Buddha so they are the retinue of the true Buddha.

The above analysis suggests that the MPPŚ has developed the concept of the Buddha on the basis of the philosophical ideas in the early Mahāyāna *sūtras* while adopting the two-body theory of the Sarvāstivāda. It is evident that the concept of the *dharmakāya* as depicted in the MPPŚ possesses many qualities and attributes that are characteristic of the *saṃbhogakāya*. These include the marvellous body produced by merit and its retinue of great bodhisattvas who have one more birth to *bodhi*. It was through such doctrinal innovations that paved the way for the appearance of the concept of the *saṃbhogakāya*. This marks an important step towards the systematization of thought in the formulation of the *trikāya* theory.

## 6. A Solution to the Complex Problem of the Physical Body of the Buddha

Habito and Makransky point out that the *Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkāra* (MSA) is the

first text in which the systematic explanation of the *trikāya* theory is found.<sup>120</sup> It is also probably the first text in which the concept of *saṃbhogakāya* as the enjoyment body of the Buddha is found.

The main object of the MSA is to establish Mahāyāna as the teaching of the Buddha.<sup>121</sup> This is because Mahāyāna has been accused of not being the true teaching of the Buddha by other Buddhist schools. There are at least two Mahāyāna *sūtras* which record this historical dispute. The *Daoxingbanruojing*, the earliest extant version of the *Aṣṭa*, mentions: “I don’t want to listen to (the teachings in the *Daoxingbanruojing*), because all these are not said by the Buddha, but things concerning matters (other than the Dharma).”<sup>122</sup> The Sanskrit version of the *Aṣṭa* mentions this more clearly. They are “not the Buddha’s words but poetry made by poets.”<sup>123</sup> The \**Pratyutpannasamādhisūtra*, which was also translated by Lokakṣema in the second century CE, says, “Upon hearing this *samādhi*, (they) are not happy and do not believe ... but (they) speak to each other; ‘What is this talk? From where have (the speakers) heard it? This may be created by themselves collectively and therefore this *sūtra* was not taught by the Buddha.’”<sup>124</sup> Similar statements are also found in the *Mahāvaiṣṭya-dhāraṇī-ratnaprabhāsa-sūtra*, like “heretic saying”, and “not spoken by the Buddha”,<sup>125</sup> and in the Mahāyāna *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*, “the teachings of *Vaiṣṭyasūtras* are Māra’s teachings”.<sup>126</sup> When Mahāyāna appeared in the history of Buddhism, it was criticized as not being the true teaching of the Buddha. The Sarvāstivāda teacher Vasubandhu, before being converted to Mahāyāna, believed that “Mahāyāna was not the true teaching of Buddha,” and he initially did not believe in Mahāyāna teachings.<sup>127</sup> In fact, he initially composed the *Vibhāṣā* in 1,000,000 verses with the intention to condemn Mahāyāna teachings. When the literary composition was finished, Kātyāyanīputra had a stone inscribed with the following proclamation:

“Those who hereafter learn this Dharma must not go out of the country of Kāśmīra. No sentence of the eight books (*Aṣṭagrantha*), no sentence of the *Vibhāṣā* must pass out of the land lest the other schools, or the Mahāyāna should corrupt the

true Dharma.”<sup>128</sup>

At the very beginning, the MSA also states: “Some people doubt whether the Mahāyāna is the true teaching of the Buddha, and that such great merit (of the Buddha) can never be obtained. Now, in order to expel their doubts I establish that Mahāyāna really is the teaching of the Buddha.”<sup>129</sup> In the text, the author quotes from nearly thirty *sūtras* and mentioned some of them by their titles, such as the *Prajñāpāramitā*, and the *Daśabhūmika*. Some are quoted in general as ‘the *sūtra*’ or ‘the *yathoktaṃ bhagavatā*’ without giving any specific title.<sup>130</sup> The MSA discusses many topics such as *gotra*, *viññāpti-mātratā*, *dharmadhātu*, *dharmatā*, *tathatā*, *tathāgatagarbha*, and *trikāya*. It is obvious that the author of the text analyzed and synthesized the existing practices and theories of Mahāyāna developed and established by his predecessors. On that basis, the author took their unelaborated aspects and developed them into more advanced theories. Among all the topics and theories discussed in the MSA, the most distinguishing theory introduced was that of the *trikāya*. It in fact made a tremendous impact on Mahāyāna Buddhism. The author formulated the *trikāya* theory by establishing a new concept, the *saṃbhogakāya*, as an attempt to solve the complex problem concerning the *rūpakāya* of the Buddha. This theory was so successful that it became one of the pillars of Mahāyāna teaching. In order to clarify this point, we have to examine the author and the background to the composition of the MSA to establish the position of Mahāyāna and its relationship with the Hīnayāna schools.

There is a controversy among scholars over the authorship of the MSA. One of the causes is that the original Sanskrit text does not give the name of the author, but merely states at the end: mahāyānasūtrālamkāre-suvyavadāta-samaya-mahābodhisattva-bhāsite.<sup>131</sup> However, the Chinese translation mentions that both the text and its commentary (*bhāṣya*) were composed by Bodhisattva Asaṅga, while the Tibetan tradition attributes the text to Bodhisattva Maitreya and its commentary to Vasubandhu.<sup>132</sup> Although there is no consensus regarding the authorship of the MSA all the arguments are centered on three persons: Maitreya, Asaṅga and

Vasubandhu.<sup>133</sup> Maitreya is a controversial figure connected with the legendary future Buddha and hence most scholars express a sceptical attitude to his historical identity.<sup>134</sup> However Asaṅga and Vasubandhu, who were great Mahāyāna teachers, are real historical personages whose dates are relatively settled.<sup>135</sup> Therefore, they seem to be the more possible candidates for the authorship of the MSA.

There are two early sources in Chinese concerning the lives of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu: the *Life of Vasubandhu* translated by Paramārtha (499-569 CE) and Xuanzang's *Datangxiyuji* (the Record of the Western Regions). These two sources agree basically with each other on the fact that Asaṅga and Vasubandhu were brothers born in a Brahmin family in Puruṣa-pura in North India.<sup>136</sup> They both became Buddhist monks of the Sarvāstivāda school and were later converted to Mahāyāna Buddhism on which they wrote many treatises. Some of these are available today in both Chinese and Tibetan translations. We can see two pictures from this brief account of the lives of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu.

First, Asaṅga and Vasubandhu lived in an age when the Sarvāstivāda was very influential, but it was gradually declining and giving way to the new and attractive movement of Mahāyāna, which was gaining ground progressively in terms of both followers and doctrinal elaboration. Many new Mahāyāna *sūtras* came into existence and many treatises were written, through which the Mahāyānists reinterpreted many of the concepts in early Buddhism and also introduced many new concepts establishing a revisionist path to Buddhahood.<sup>137</sup> Thus the Mahāyāna attracted many people, including eminent personages such as Asaṅga and Vasubandhu. Such a climate in Northwest India during the third to fourth centuries is also evidenced by another eminent Sarvāstivādin scholar, the controversial person Nāgārjuna, who later became a Mahāyānist and composed the *\*Mahāprajñāpāramitāśāstra*, as discussed by Lamotte.<sup>138</sup> However attractive the Mahāyāna teachings might have appeared to be, they were not accepted by all the Buddhist schools, especially the Sthaviras who rejected and vehemently criticized the new teaching as not that of the Buddha. This

situation is clearly recorded in both the MSA and the *Mahāyānasamgraha* in which the authors listed many reasons defending Mahāyāna not only as the teaching of the Buddha but also as the superior teaching.<sup>139</sup>

We think that the doctrinal conflict between Mahāyāna and Hīnayāna was much more serious than it appeared to be because even today the Theravādins do not accept the Mahāyāna teachings on Buddhology and the bodhisattva ideal. The Mahāyāna *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* is a good evidence for this conflict, because as discussed above, this *sūtra* was most probably compiled to defend the Mahāyāna position that the Buddha is eternal. The date of the compilation of the *sūtra* was possibly between the third to the fifth century according to Shih Hengching.<sup>140</sup> The *sūtra* quotes from five other Mahāyāna *sūtras*: the *\*Mahāprajñāpāramitā*, the *\*Saddharmapuṇḍarīka*, the *\*Sūrāṅgamasamādhi*, the *\*Tathāgatagarbha*, and the *\*Avatamsaka*. The latest amongst the five *sūtras* is the *\*Tathāgatagarbha*, which was translated into Chinese for the first time by Faju in 290-306 CE, while the first copy of the MMPS was obtained by Faxian in India around 405 CE.<sup>141</sup> So the MMPS was probably compiled before the end of the fourth century, which corresponds approximately with the time when both Asaṅga and Vasubandhu were active in India. In such a situation, the author of the MSA, as a great Mahāyāna teacher, would have felt strongly the responsibility and need to compose a work to reinforce the new teaching.

Secondly, both Asaṅga and Vasubandhu learned and mastered the teachings of both Sarvāstivāda and Mahāyāna. In fact they must have known well the teachings of all schools as demonstrated by their extant works. The author of the MSA possessed expertise in the Buddhology of all schools, summarized the existing doctrines on Buddhology including those of the Hīnayāna schools, in particular the Sarvāstivāda, and formulated the theory of the *trikāya*.<sup>142</sup> Therefore, he must have been aware of all the problems concerning the physical body of the Buddha, the debate between the Sarvāstivādins and the Mahāsāṃghikas, and the conflict between the short life span of Śākyamuni and his great merit described in Mahāyāna *sūtras*.

It appears certain that the author of the MSA composed the work after summarizing the teachings taught in the early Mahāyāna *sūtras* in order to establish that Mahāyāna was an authentic teaching of the Buddha. One of the most important issues discussed by the author is the concept of the Buddha, which has become a subject of contention among the different schools over a period of several centuries. The Hīnayāna schools represented by the Sarvāstivāda did not accept the transcendental concept of the Buddha of the Mahāsāṃghikas. It was the latter that was to form the basis for the Mahāyānists to establish their own concept of the Buddha. As a result, the Hīnayāna schools also rejected the Mahāyāna concept of the Buddha. Contemporary Theravādins do not subscribe to the *trikāya* theory. However, the *trikāya* theory and the bodhisattva ideal are two of the main doctrinal developments of Mahāyāna Buddhism. Of the two concepts, that of the Buddha is more important because the main aim of the Mahāyānists is to attain Buddhahood rather than arhatship. To the Mahāyānists, Bodhisattva practice is merely a means to this end. The epistemological status of the Buddha was a central topic to all Buddhist schools, for it was naturally important for them to establish their specific concept of the Buddha, the founder of their respective doctrines. Therefore, in order to establish Mahāyāna as the teaching of the Buddha, the author of the MSA first had to establish a theory on the Buddha's status. This was vital for the formulation of the remaining teachings of Mahāyāna such as the bodhisattva ideal. It was also important to explain the origins of the Mahāyāna *sūtras* that were not found in the *Āgamas* or the *Nikāyas*, but from which the author expounded the Mahāyāna teaching.

Under such circumstances, the author of the MSA formulated the *trikāya* theory by establishing a new concept, that of the *saṃbhogakāya*. This was advanced to resolve the paradox concerning the Buddha's *rūpakāya*. The *saṃbhogakāya* was established on the basis of the teachings on the concept of the Buddha in the early and middle Mahāyāna *sūtras* such as the *\*Prajñāpāramitā* and the *\*Avataṃsaka* as we have discussed in the previous chapters. The author of the MSA explains the concept

of the *saṃbhogakāya* as the body of enjoyment, which is eternal, enjoying the *dharmas* in the great assembly of bodhisattvas.<sup>143</sup> In his *Mahāyānasamgrahabhāṣya* Vasubandhu elucidates this point further, stating that the purpose of the *saṃbhogakāya* is exclusively to bring bodhisattvas to maturity.<sup>144</sup> All transcendental qualities of the Buddha which have been developed by the Mahāsāṃghikas along with the early Mahāyāna *sūtras*, while not found in the physical body of the historical Buddha or in the *Nikāyas* and the *Āgamas*, are attributed to this new concept, the *saṃbhogakāya*. This includes the second and the third aspects of the concept of the *dharmakāya* in the MPPŚ: the marvellous and wonderful body produced by merit and the great bodhisattva retinue. The *saṃbhogakāya* represents the aspect of the Buddha's merit as manifested in boundless light and limitless lifespan. It includes many other attributes via the enjoyment of *dharmas* with the assembly of great bodhisattvas. The historical Buddha is considered only a transformation body (*nirmāṇakāya*) through which he made a show of being born in North India, attaining enlightenment and then entering into *parinirvāṇa*. Whatever bad *karma* or troubles he encountered are considered as skilful means to save sentient beings. In the ultimate sense, Buddhas never suffer. This aspect of the Buddha is designated the *nirmāṇakāya*, which can manifest itself in any form anywhere in order to help sentient beings attain *nirvāṇa*. The *dharmakāya* is the essence of Buddhahood, the realization of the true nature of all *dharmas*, as well as the principle of the universe, and it is therefore the support of the other two *kāyas*. The theory of *trikāya* is so important for the explanation of Mahāyāna teachings that it is found in many Mahāyāna *sūtras* and *śāstras*, and it exerts a tremendous influence on Buddhism in India, China and other Buddhist countries.

### 7. The Development of the Saṃbhogakāya

The term *saṃbhogakāya* is translated into Chinese in two ways: the body of enjoyment and the reward body. This indicates two aspects of the concept.<sup>145</sup> First,



the *saṃbhogakāya* is translated as the body of enjoyment, sharing Dharma with bodhisattvas when it is viewed from the standpoint of its function. Second, the *saṃbhogakāya* is translated as the reward body of the Buddha on account of his long arduous training of the bodhisattva career, with regard to the great merit of the Buddha. These two aspects are closely connected to each other and cannot be separated. However, in the later Chinese translations, more and more emphasis was placed on the second aspect of the concept of merit, so that the term *saṃbhogakāya* was more often rendered as the reward body. Makransky studied the term *saṃbhogakāya* and when comparing the meaning of the Sanskrit word with the Tibetan translation, suggests that the term should be translated as “embodiment [of Buddhahood] in communal enjoyment of dharma” or “embodiment for communal enjoyment of dharma”.<sup>146</sup> Here it is clear that Makransky stresses only the first meaning of the term. But according to the MSA, the characteristic of the *saṃbhogakāya* is the achievement of benefit for oneself, while the characteristic of the *nirmāṇakāya* is the achievement of benefit for others.<sup>147</sup> In this sense, the *saṃbhogakāya* is the body of enjoyment of the achievement which is the reward of bodhisattva training. However, Makransky neglects the second aspect of the term *saṃbhogakāya*, the reward of great merit. Makransky says that the prefix “saṃ” signifies “together with” or “mutual”. According to Monier Williams, “saṃ” is used as a preposition or prefix to verbs and verbal derivatives to express the meaning of “completeness”, “thoroughness”, “intensity” and “union”.<sup>148</sup> For instance, in “*saṃbuddha*”, the prefix “saṃ” means “completely, thoroughly”. Thus, “*saṃbuddha*” means “the completely enlightened one”. Hence, “*saṃbhoga*” means complete or thorough enjoyment.<sup>149</sup> Therefore, the term *saṃbhogakāya* can perhaps be translated as “the body of complete enjoyment of the reward” when we take into consideration the two aspects of the term.

It is on account of these two aspects of the concept of the *saṃbhogakāya* that it has been dualistically developed in later works. From the reward aspect of the

*saṃbhogakāya*, the *svasaṃbhogakāya* is developed while from the aspect of the enjoyment of Dharma, the *paraṣaṃbhogakāya* is developed. Thus, the *svasaṃbhogakāya* is the body of enjoyment for the benefit of oneself and the *paraṣaṃbhogakāya* is the body of enjoyment for the benefit of others. In his \**Buddhabhūmisūtraśāstra*, Bandhuprabha states: “There are two kinds of *saṃbhogakāya*: the *svasaṃbhogakāya* that is accomplished by practising (the *pāramitās*) during the three *asaṃkhyeya kalpas*, and the *paraṣaṃbhogakāya* for the enjoyment of the Dharma with bodhisattvas.”<sup>150</sup> The \**Vijñaptimātratāsiddhiśāstra* further explains: “The *svasaṃbhogakāya* is the ultimately and completely pure form-body which is eternal and universal. It is the infinite real merit (*kuśaladharmā*) achieved through the accumulation of both wisdom and merit during the three *asaṃkhyeya kalpas* of practising (the *pāramitās*) by all the Tathāgatas. It is to continuously enjoy the pleasure of the Dharma for oneself into the infinite future without interruption. The *paraṣaṃbhogakāya* is the wonderful body of pure merit manifested by the Tathāgatas through the *samatājñāna* (wisdom of sameness). It abides in a Pure Land, manifests great miracles, turns the wheel of righteous Dharma and eliminates the net of doubts for all bodhisattvas in the ten stages so they may enjoy the pleasure of the Mahāyāna Dharma.”<sup>151</sup>

It is evident from these two major works that the merit of the *saṃbhogakāya* as the result of bodhisattva practice is more and more emphasised. Logically entailed is the concept of the *saṃbhogakāya* elaborated into these two aspects, as we have discussed at the beginning of this section. The \**Vijñaptimātratāsiddhiśāstra* explains that the *svasaṃbhogakāya* is infinite and endowed with limitless marks and attributes, which are the products of immeasurable merit. Although merit and wisdom do not belong to matter (*rūpa*) and the form of the *svasaṃbhogakāya* cannot be measured, it is omnipresent on account of the *dharmakāya*, its realization and support. By the practice of gradually transforming the pure consciousness into a Pure Land from the time of enlightenment to the infinite future, the *svasaṃbhogakāya* abides in the Pure

Land. It represents the maturation of causes and conditions relevant to this particular Pure Land. The *parasaṃbhogakāya* is also infinite and abides in its own Pure Land. This Pure Land is the maturation of the causes and conditions created through altruistic practice. As a result, the wisdom of equality and great compassion are manifested in different Pure Lands, the size and quality of which change in accordance with one's level on the ten *bhūmis*.

As we have seen, the driving force behind the emergence of the *saṃbhogakāya* is the need to find a solution to the complex problem concerning the physical body of the Buddha. The doctrinal foundation of the *saṃbhogakāya* was already present in the early and middle Mahāyāna *sūtras* such as the *\*Prajñāpāramitā* and the *\*Avataṃsaka* collections. Contention over the problem first began between the Mahāsāṃghikas and the Sarvāstivādins when the former thoroughly deified the Buddha and attributed to him numerous supernatural qualities. In the course of time, the Buddha was termed *lokottara*. Transcendental qualities such as the infinite and blissful life of the Buddha were further developed in the Mahāyāna *sūtras* as a result of the Mahāyāna's emphasis on the merit of the Buddha accumulated by the bodhisattva practice. However, the fact that the historical Buddha lived for *only* eighty years on earth and was confronted with many problems proved problematic for the Mahāyānists. The MPPŚ attempted to solve the problem by utilizing the two-body theory of the Sarvāstivāda while doctrinally relying on the teachings of the *\*Prajñāpāramitāsūtras*. It is stated that the real Buddha is the *dharmakāya* possessing a majestic form with a great retinue of bodhisattvas, and expounding the Dharma perpetually. The *nirmāṇakāya* is a mere manifestation for the sake of sentient beings. It is in such a doctrinal and historical environment that the *trikāya* theory appeared in the MSA, formulated vis-à-vis the establishment and addition of the concept of *saṃbhogakāya*.

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<sup>1</sup> Both Chinese translations of the *Avataṃsaka*, one by Buddhahadra in 317-420 CE and the other by Śīkṣānanda in 695-699 CE, mention the term "the reward body of *karma*" amongst the ten kinds of body (T9, 565b, c, 661c; T10, 200a, b, 201b, c).

These ten kinds of body include the body of sentient beings, the body of land, the reward body of *karma*, the *śrāvaka* body, the *pratyekabuddha* body, the bodhisattva body, the Tathāgata body, the wisdom body, the body of doctrine, and the body of space. 'Reward body of karma' is not meant in the sense of the enjoyment body of the Buddha.

<sup>2</sup> Ruben Habito, (1978), 11. John Makransky, (1997), 54.

<sup>3</sup> D. T. Suzuki, (1930), 308-338.

<sup>4</sup> Ruben Habito, (1978), 10-11.

<sup>5</sup> Takeuchi Shiyokou, (1983), 166-170.

<sup>6</sup> T25, 121b-c.

<sup>7</sup> The *Parinirvāṇasūtra*, T1, 182b-c; the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* translated by Faxian, T1, 203b; the *Aṅgulimālyasūtra*, T2, 539c; the *Ekottarāgama*, T2, 578a and the *Sūtra on Ānanda's Fellow Student*, T2, 874c. D. II, 149. The *\*Dīrghāgama*, T1, 31a; 79a.

<sup>8</sup> T27, 890c.

<sup>9</sup> T17, 753b line 28-29.

<sup>10</sup> T27, 871c-872b, 391c-392b.

<sup>11</sup> This quotation of the Mahāsāṃghikas is found in the *\*Saṃyuktāgama*, T2, 28b12 and the *Aṅguttaranikāya*, ii, 37. But in two other places of the *Mahāvibhāṣā* (T27, 229a and 391c-392a) it is said that this view was held by the Mahāsāṃghikas with no mention of the Vibhajyavādins.

<sup>12</sup> This quotation of the Sarvāstivāda is found in the *\*Madhyamāgama*, T1, 645b and the *Aṅguttaranikāya*, iv, 43.

<sup>13</sup> T27, p871c-872b.

<sup>14</sup> T29, 557b.

<sup>15</sup> T27, 177a-b. 謂或有謂，歸依佛者，歸依如來頭項腹背，及手足等所合成身。The translation is mine.

<sup>16</sup> T29, 557b. 然大眾部復作是言，如來身中，所有諸法，皆是無漏，盡是所歸。The translation is mine.

<sup>17</sup> Translated from the Chinese text into English by Masuda, (1922), 18-21.

<sup>18</sup> Masuda, (1922), 52.

<sup>19</sup> T27, 229a-b; 391c-392c; 735c; 871c-872a.

<sup>20</sup> The opposing party states that the Buddha received (1) three hundred thousand robes in one day from householder Ujaluo. This is gain. (2) The Buddha returned with an empty bowl from a Brahmin village. This is no gain. (3) The name of the Buddha reached Akaniṣṭha heaven when he attained enlightenment. This is the honour of fame. (4) The Buddha was subjected to slander by the women Sundarī and Ciñcamānavikā. His tarnished reputation was thereafter known throughout the sixteen great kingdoms. This is disgrace. (5) The Brahmins had pure faith in him because the facial complexion of the Buddha did not change (in debate). This is praise. (6) The Brahmin Bhāradvāja cursed the Buddha with five hundred verses. This is defamation. (7) The Buddha enjoyed incomparable mental and physical happiness which is not experienced by sentient beings. This is happiness. (8) The Buddha also suffered from headaches, back pain, a *khadira* thorn and a splinter in his foot. This is suffering. T27, 871c-872b.

<sup>21</sup> T27, 871c-872a.

<sup>22</sup> In the Theravāda tradition there is another source relevant to this issue, a Sāmmatīya list of sixteen incidents transmitted by Daśabalaśrīmitra in his *Saṃskṛtīsaṃskṛta-viniścaya*. It is probably a Dhammarucika list in a Sinhalese work

of the fourteenth century or earlier called *Detis Karmaya*, which allegedly describes 32 such incidents. The manuscript of this work is preserved in the British Library. See K. D. Somadasa, *Catalogue of the Hugh Nevill Collection of Sinhalese Manuscripts in the British Library*, 2 (Henley-on-Thames: Pali Text Society, 1989), 122-123. See also Paul Harrison, (1995b), 11. Since this is a very late work it does not fall into the scope of our discussion of the debate on the physical body of the Buddha in the period of the early Buddhist schools.

<sup>23</sup> The ten texts are (1) the \**Pañcaśatasthavirāvadāna*, T4, 190a-202a, (2) the *Xingqixingjing*, T4, 163c-174b, (3) the \**Bhaiṣajyavastu* of the \**Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya*, T24, 94a-97a, (4) the \**Lokānuvartanasūtra*, T17, 773a-774c, (5) the *Pusaxingwushiyuansheng Jing*, T17, 773a-774c, (6) the \**Upāyakauśalyasūtra*, T11, 594c-607c, T12, 156a-165c, T12, 166a-178b, (7) the \**Mahāyānadaśadharmakasūtra*, T11, 154c-157a, T11, 767b-769a, (8) the \**Tathāgatapratibimbapratīṣṭhānusamsā-sūtra*, T16, 788a-788c, T16, 788c-790a, T16, 790a-796b, (9) the \**Mahāprajñāpāramitāsāstra*, T25, 121c. (10) the \**Mahāyānāvātārakaśāstra*, T32, 37b-c.

<sup>24</sup> The five Tibetan texts are (1) the \**Upāyakauśalyasūtra* translated by Gos Chos grub (Chinese Wu Facheng) based on Dharmarakṣa's rendition (Taisho No.345), (2) the \**Upāyakauśalyasūtra* translated by Dānaśīla, Karmavarman and Ye shes sde from Sanskrit, (3) the \**Bhaiṣajyavastu* of the \**Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya*, (4) the \**Lokānuvartanasūtra* and (5) the \**Tathāgatapratibimbapratīṣṭhānusamsā-sūtra*.

<sup>25</sup> The Tibetan translation of the \**Anavataptagāthā* will not be dealt with here as the present writer does not specialize in Tibetan sources. I will refer to it only through the works of other scholars. According to Paul Harrison (1995b), the Tibetan text refers to these several times as *las kyi rgyud bcu po*, i.e. Skt. *daśa-karma-ploti/pluti*.

<sup>26</sup> For this karma, the \**Bhaiṣajyavastu* of the \**Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya* gives a second story. In a previous life, the Buddha was a man of bad temper named Weilou. He loved a prostitute and bestowed upon her many nice cloths as presents for marriage. Later he discovered that she left with another man with his presents. He killed her when he found her again, but he threw the knife stained with blood in front of a *pratyekabuddha* who was meditating at the foot of a tree. Thus, the *pratyekabuddha* was mistaken as the killer by the king's men. When Weilou saw him again, the *pratyekabuddha* was being arrested and taken to be killed. Regretful of his deeds, Weilou was surrounded and persecuted. As a result, the Buddha suffered in hell for a long time and the remaining effect of that *karma* was slander by others.

<sup>27</sup> See Jonathan S. Walters (1990), 76-7.

<sup>28</sup> T4, 190a-202a. This *sūtra* was translated by Dharmarakṣa in 303 CE. The Buddha's bad karma is found in the last part of the *sūtra*, 201a-202a.

<sup>29</sup> T4, 163c-174b. The whole *sūtra* is devoted to the explanation of the ten bad *karmas* of the Buddha.

<sup>30</sup> T24, the part on the bad *karma* is found in pages 95a-97a, the last part of the \**Bhaiṣajyavastu*.

<sup>31</sup> É. Lamotte, (1988), 692.

<sup>32</sup> The last verse in the Buddha's speech is incomplete as some lines are missing.

<sup>33</sup> The text starts thus: "Near the Anotatta Lake, on the delightful rocky ground, where various gems were sparkling and various sweet scents [were exuded] in the forest, the Lord of the World, surrounded by a huge community of monks, sitting down, then explained his own previous *karma*: 'Hear from me, O monks, the *karma* produced by me [and] the ripening of strands of *karma* in the Buddha himself.'" Cited

from Jonathan Walters, (1990), 76.

<sup>34</sup> See Jonathan S. Walters (1990), 76-7.

<sup>35</sup> Cited from Sally Mellick Cutler, (1994), 14-15. See Heinz Berchert, "Über Das Apadānabush" in E. Frauwallner, hrsg., *Wiener Zeitschrift Für Die Kunde Süd- Und Ostasiens Und Archiv Für Indische Philosophie* Band II (Wein: Verlag Bruder Hollinek, 1958), 1-21.

<sup>36</sup> Some scholars think that the Mūlasarvāstivāda School may predate the Sarvāstivāda school, thus they hesitate to say that the former is a sub-sect of the latter. However, the Chinese translation of the Buddhist *Tripitaka* shows that the term Mūlasarvāstivāda is not mentioned in early texts but only in Yijing's (the end of the seventh to the beginning of the eighth century) translations, while the term Sarvāstivāda is mentioned in Paramārtha's (mid of sixth century) translations. Therefore, we are probably not wrong in saying that the Mūlasarvāstivāda is derived from the Sarvāstivāda.

<sup>37</sup> Jonathan Walters, (1990), 77-79.

<sup>38</sup> Jonathan Walters, (1990), 78. See E.B. Cowell and R.A. Neil, eds., *The Divyāvadāna, A Collection of Early Buddhist Legends* (Cambridge University Press, 1886), 87 line 8; 150 line 24; 241 line 26.

<sup>39</sup> Jonathan Walters, (1990), 78. *Divyāvadāna*, ocit., 150: *Anavatapte mahāsarasi śrāvakaiḥ sārdham pūrvikā karmaplotir vyākṛita bhavati*. Dr. Tadeusz Skorupski orally informs the present writer that this *karmaploti* in the *Divyāvadāna* is one of the ten inevitable actions of the Buddha.

<sup>40</sup> Jonathan Walters (1990), 78.

<sup>41</sup> N. Dutt, (1978a), p75-76.

<sup>42</sup> T3, 932a. 摩訶僧祇師, 名爲大事; 薩婆多師, 名此經爲大莊嚴; 迦葉維師, 名爲佛生因緣; 曇無德師, 名爲釋迦牟尼佛本行; 尼沙塞師, 名爲毘尼藏根本。

<sup>43</sup> T24, 78a-97a.

<sup>44</sup> Each story starts with the phrase "Thus (I) heard, the Buddha once sojourned at the Lake Anavatapta with five hundred bhikṣus who were all arhats with the six transcendental powers" and concludes with the phrase "all delighted and happy to accept the Buddha's discourse".

<sup>45</sup> In the prose section of the *sūtra*, it is said that Pure-eye, the actor, killed a prostitute for her nice clothes and buried her body in the hut of a *pratyekabuddha*. Thus the *pratyekabuddha* was caught and suffered. On seeing the *pratyekabuddha*'s suffering, the actor took pity and rescued him. T4, 164c-165a.

<sup>46</sup> The \**Lokāmvartanasūtra* (T17, 773a-774c), which was translated by Indo-Scythian *śrāmaṇa* Lokakṣema between 168-189 CE, is the earliest Chinese translation among all the seven texts in which the bad *karma* of the Buddha is rejected. The Chinese translation is entirely in prose, but as Harrison points out, apart from the introduction and conclusion, ninety verses are clearly distinguishable. The Tibetan translation of Jinamitra, Dānaśīla and Ye shes sde around the beginning of the ninth century, is entirely in verse containing 113 four-line stanzas. The Tibetan translation displays certain differences from the Chinese version since the texts are separated by six hundred years. This text is very short and roughly falls into two parts, the first part describing the person and life of the Buddha, the second primarily dealing with his teaching. See also Paul Harrison, (1982), 211, 212.

<sup>47</sup> The three kinds of bad *karma* are (1) "The Prince sat at the foot of a tree in Jambudvīpa and from then on for six years, he suffered hardship. It is in conformity

with the ways of the world that he makes such a show of suffering from hardship.” T17, 751c line 14-15. This translation is mine. (2) “The Buddha’s body has never suffered illness, yet he manifests illness, summons doctors and takes medicine. The giver of the medicine obtains immeasurable blessings. It is in conformity with the ways of the world that he makes such a show.” T17, 752a line 12-13. The translation is adopted from Paul Harrison, (1982), 220-1. (3) “The blessings of the Buddha’s merits are inexhaustible, and no-one can surpass them. The Buddha enters the city for *piṇḍapāda*, and leaves with an empty *pātra*. It is in conformity with the ways of the world that he makes such a show.” T17, 752b line 6-7. The translation is also adopted from Paul Harrison, (1982), 222.

<sup>48</sup> T17, 752c line 2-3. 佛前身所作善惡，不可前身得，會當後身得，佛示人自作自得，隨世間習俗而入，示現如是。The translation is mine.

<sup>49</sup> T17, 753a line 11-12. 佛諸惡悉盡，但有諸功德具足，佛現人諸惡未盡，隨世間習俗而入，示現如是。The translation is mine.

<sup>50</sup> The similarities between the *Lokāmvartanasūtra* and the relevant part of the *Mahāvastu* of the Lokottaravāda were first discovered and demonstrated by Takahara Shinichi in his article ‘*Mahāvastu ni mirareru fukutokuron*’, in *Fukaoka daigaku sanjūgoshūnen kinen ronbunshū, Jinbunhen* (1969), 117-141. Shizutani Masao commented upon it in his *Shoki daijobukkyo no seiritsu katei* (Kyoto, 1974), 282, 315-318. See Paul Harrison, (1982), 213.

<sup>51</sup> Cited from Paul Harrison, (1982), 227. See also Bareau, *Les sectes bouddhiques*, 57-9, 76, 301-2.

<sup>52</sup> The relevant part of the text is quoted from Masuda, (1922), 18-21.

<sup>53</sup> Masuda, (1922), 19.

<sup>54</sup> T17, 752a line 14-15. 佛力不可當，持一指動十方佛刹，現人羸瘦疲極，隨世間習俗而入，示現如是。The translation is mine.

<sup>55</sup> T17, 752a line 22-23. 佛身力不可計，終無坐起、行步、臥、出，現人坐起行步臥出，隨世間習俗而入，示現如是。The translation is mine.

<sup>56</sup> T17, 753b line 28-29. 佛力無有雙比，不可復計，亦無滅盡時，現人衰老，求人給使，隨世間習俗而入，示現如是。The translation is mine.

<sup>57</sup> T17, 753b line 13-14. 佛智慧、功德、威神不可復計，佛現人限長短，使人知之，隨世間習俗而入，示現如是。The translation is mine.

<sup>58</sup> Masuda, (1922), 20.

<sup>59</sup> T17, 752b line 24-26. 合聚十方雷電之聲，共作一聲，不能動佛一毛，現入禪三昧當於無聲處，隨世間習俗而入，示現如是。The translation is mine.

<sup>60</sup> T17, 752b line 29- c line 1. 佛想計本悉斷常，不離三昧，現人爲說若干種經法，隨世間習俗而入，示現如是。The meaning of this sentence is not clear but the expression “the Buddha is always in *samādhi*” is explicit. The translation is mine.

<sup>61</sup> T17, 753a line 9-10. 諸佛心皆無所罣礙，未嘗離三昧時，現人生念，隨世間習俗而入，示現如是。The translation is mine.

<sup>62</sup> Masuda, (1922), 20.

<sup>63</sup> T17, 752a line 10-11. 佛身無有衰老時，但有眾德，而現身衰老，隨世間習俗而入，示現如是。The translation is mine.

<sup>64</sup> T17, 773c line 26-27. 菩薩世世不壞人宅舍，常喜作舍，用是故，佛鞞金剛之力，四方如山，無能害佛身者。The translation is mine.

<sup>65</sup> The three Chinese translations are: (1) 《慧上菩薩問大善權經》，T12, No.345

translated by Dharmarakṣa in 285 CE; (2) 《大寶積經·大乘方便會》, T11, No.310.38 translated by Nandī in 420 CE; (3) 《佛說大方廣善權方便經》, T12, No.346 translated by Dānapāla in 1005 CE. See Paul Harrison, (1995b), 8-9. There is also an English translation of T11, No.310.38 found in Garma C.C. Chang, ed. *A Treasury of Mahāyāna Sūtras: Selections from the Mahāratnakūṭa Sūtra*, University Park, Penn. University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983, 427-468. According to Paul Harrison there are also two Tibetan versions, the first being a translation from the Chinese by Gos Chos grub (Chinese Wu Facheng), based on Dharmarakṣa's rendition entitled \**Upāyakauśalyasūtra*. This is an independent work found in the Tibetan Kanjur. The second was translated from the Sanskrit by Dānaśīla, Karmavarman and Ye shes sde, bearing the same title as the first one and found in the Tibetan version of the *Ratnakūṭa*. Paul Harrison, (1995b), 9. The first of these, Wu Facheng's version, was translated into English by Mark Tatz as *The Skill in Means (Upāyakauśalya) Sūtra*, Delhi, Motilal Banarsidass, 1994.

<sup>66</sup> T12, 165c line12-15. Nandī's translation is somewhat different, "Good man, I have finished explaining and revealing my ingenuity. You should keep this a secret and not speak of it to lowly, inferior people who have few good roots. Why? Because even *śrāvakas* and *pratyekabuddhas* cannot comprehend this *sūtra*, much less can lowly and inferior, ordinary persons believe or understand it. Ordinary people cannot learn ingenuity, and so the *Sūtra of Ingenuity* is of no use to them; not a single ordinary person can accept or practise it. Only *Bodhisattvas* can learn and teach the doctrine of ingenuity." (Garma C.C. Chang's translation, 1983)

<sup>67</sup> T12, 159c line 15; 162a line 16 and 162b line 19.

<sup>68</sup> Paul Harrison (1995a), 56.

<sup>69</sup> T12, p156a-165c. Here the Chinese word *Huishang* means superior in wisdom. The \**Lokānuvartana* also begins with Mañjuśrī requesting the Buddha to expound *upāyakauśalya*. Mañjuśrī is a bodhisattva superior in wisdom. I suspect that the original Sanskrit text of Dharmarakṣa's translation is an outgrowth of and a further development of the \**Lokānuvartanasūtra* because in both *sūtras*, Mañjuśrī and Huishang are *bodhisattvas* who request the Buddha to expound on *upāyakauśalya*.

<sup>70</sup> T12, 163b. 佛告慧上菩薩：‘如來所現，餘殃有十，是亦世尊善權方便，當了至誠，欲使如來有毛髮瑕，不具殖德本，欲令有短行不具足，逮成正覺，坐佛樹者此亦不然。所以者何？暢清白法，無有眾瑕，族姓子，欲知如來皆以[打-丁+慧][打-丁+滅]諸不善法，世尊無礙，況復立穢而有餘殃。The translation is mine.

<sup>71</sup> T12, 165c. 取要言之，如來所現，殘有十殃，皆當知佛行權隨時，眾庶懷惡，多崇非法，故為現應，非有殃也。使知去就至無上慧，如來所歎，權宜最尊，皆非殃罪，但示現耳，作是得是，聞者悚懼，不敢為非。The translation is mine.

<sup>72</sup> The \**Ratnakūṭasūtra*, T11, 154c-157a, and the \**Mahāyānadaśadharmakasūtra* T11, 767b-769a. Lamotte translates the relevant passage into French and which is again rendered into English by Sara Boin-Webb as follows: "How do Bodhisattva Mahāsattvas understand the Tathāgata's cryptic words (*saṃdhāyabhāṣita*)? Bodhisattva Mahāsattvas are skilled in understanding exactly the deep and secret meaning hidden in the *sūtra*. O son of good family, when I predict to the *śrāvakas* their obtaining of supreme and perfect enlightenment, this is not correct; when I say to Ānanda that I have backache, this is not correct; when I say to bhikṣus: 'I am old, you should get me an assistant (*upasthāyaka*)', this is not correct. O son of good family, it is not correct that the Tathāgata, in various places, triumphed over Tīrthikas and their



systems one after another; it is not correct that an acacia thorn (*khadirakantaka*) injured the Tathāgata in the foot. When the Tathāgata again says: ‘Devadatta was my hereditary enemy, he ceaselessly followed me and sought to flatter me’, this is not correct. It is not correct that the Tathāgata, on entering Śrāvastī, went on his alms-seeking round in Śālā, the brahmans’ village, and returned with his bowl empty. Neither is it correct that Ciñcāmāṇavikā and Sundarī, attaching a wooden dish to their stomachs [so as to simulate pregnancy], slandered the Tathāgata. It is not correct that the Tathāgata, while dwelling earlier in the land of Verañjā, spent the *varṣa* season in eating only barley.” One sentence missing is “I said to Maudgalyāyana: ‘You go and ask Jīvaka, the physician, what should I take when I am ill’, this is not correct.” See Lamotte (1976), 297.

<sup>73</sup> T11, 154c. The translation is adapted from Lamotte (1976), 297.

<sup>74</sup> Amongst the three Chinese translations of the \**Tathāgatapratibimbapratīṣṭhānusamsā-sūtra*, T16, No.692 was translated under the Eastern Han dynasty 25-220 CE, T16, No.693 under the Jin dynasty 317-420 CE, and T16, No.694 by Devaprajñā in 691 CE. Only the last one mentions the bad *karmas*. What is more, in the latter half of Devaprajñā’s translation, the dialogue is mainly conducted between the Buddha and Bodhisattva Maitreya concerning the merit of making Buddha images. However, in the middle of this dialogue, the *sūtra* mentions that a person doubted whether the Buddha did make images in the past and thus bad *karma* was introduced. They were most probably inserted into the text later when the bad *karmas* became an issue of debate. According to Bunyiu Nanjio (1989, p.76), there is also a Tibetan translation of the *sūtra* similar to the first two Chinese translations.

<sup>75</sup> The *sūtra* mentions seven of the problematic events that occurred in the life of Gautama Buddha: the Devadatta incident, the three months of eating barley, the Buddha’s return with an empty bowl, the *khadira* thorn and three occasions of illness.

<sup>76</sup> Regarding the authorship of the MPPŚ, there is a controversy. Western scholars such as Lamotte are of the opinion that Nāgārjuna is not the author while Yinshun disagrees. See *Dongfang zongjiao yanjiu* (Journal of Oriental Religious Study), Taiwan, 1990, No.2, 9-70.

<sup>77</sup> T25, 121c. 若佛神力無量威德巍巍不可稱說，何以故受九罪報？ The translation is mine.

<sup>78</sup> T25, the list of the bad *karma* of the Buddha is found in 121b-122b. The translation is mine.

<sup>79</sup> Yinshun, (1994), 167. This scholar argues that the author of the MPPŚ is Nāgārjuna. See his article ‘The authorship and translation of the *Mahāprajñāpāramitā Śāstra*’ in *Dongfang zongjiao yanjiu* (Journal of the Oriental Religious Studies), 1990, No. 2.

<sup>80</sup> This was pointed out to me by Prof. Paul Harrison when he was at SOAS delivering a series of lectures on the *Sukhāvativyūha* in 1999.

<sup>81</sup> T32, 37b-c.

<sup>82</sup> The MSA states that the Śrāvakayāna and the Mahāyāna are different in five ways: (1) the initiative mind for enlightenment (*bodhi*), (2) the learning and teaching of the Dharma, (3) the skilful means, (4) the activity of converting and saving people and (5) the period of time required for enlightenment. The *śrāvakas* practise the first three aspects with the purpose of benefiting themselves, for the attainment of *nirvāna*. They do not make much effort to convert and save people so they do not have much merit. The period required for liberation is also short, namely three lifetimes. The

Mahāyānists are quite different. They practise the first three aspects for the benefit of others, they spend their lives converting and working toward liberating individuals thus acquiring great merit. The period required for liberation is very long, namely three *mahāsamkhyeya kalpas*. T31, 591b-c.

<sup>83</sup> The MPPŚ states: “The Buddha had accumulated immeasurable merit during the countless *kalpas* and when all are considered, no human being is comparable. Great causes result in great rewards. Again, the Buddha, in countless lives, practised all kinds of austerities and made offerings to beings with his own head, eyes, marrow, brain, let alone country, wealth, wife and children. (He) had practised and completed all kinds of discipline (*śīla*), all kinds of forbearance (*kṣānti*), all kinds of energy (*vīrya*), all kinds of meditation (*dhyāna*) and pure, indestructible and inexhaustible wisdom (*prajñā*). It is due to the power of the reward from these actions that (the Buddha) had such marvellous attributes.” T25, 121b-c. The translation is mine.

<sup>84</sup> T1, 15c; D ii, 115.

<sup>85</sup> Yao Zhihua, (1996), 165.

<sup>86</sup> T9, 42c, line 19-24. This translation has been adopted from Burton Watson, (1993, 227) with some changes.

<sup>87</sup> É. Lamotte (1998), 235-238.

<sup>88</sup> É. Lamotte (1998), 238.

<sup>89</sup> T9, 589c.

<sup>90</sup> T16, 335c. There are three Chinese translations of this *sūtra*. T16, No.663 was translated by Dharmarakṣa in the Northern Liang dynasty 397-439 CE. T16, No.664 is a combination of three translations edited by Baogui: Dharmarakṣa’s translation, Jīnāgupta’s translation in the Northern Zhou 557-581 CE and Paramārtha’s translation in 548-569 CE. The latter two translations are lost. T16, No.665 was translated by Yijing in 700-712 CE.

<sup>91</sup> T16, 335c-336b. 一切諸水，可知幾滴，無有能數，釋尊壽命。諸須彌山，可知斤兩，無有能量，釋尊壽命。The translation is mine.

<sup>92</sup> This is an indication that the followers of Hīnayāna schools opposed the idea of eternal Buddha of the Mahāyānists.

<sup>93</sup> T16, 794c-795a. 爾時會中有未發大乘心者，皆生疑念。如來過去為造佛像為不作耶？設若作者云何壽命而有限極，有病有苦，所居國土，多諸穢濁不得清淨。The translation is mine.

<sup>94</sup> T25, 124b. The translation is mine.

<sup>95</sup> T25, 311c-312b. *Zhang* (丈) and *li* (里) are Chinese measurements, one *zhang* is 3.33 metres and one *li* is 500 metres. The translation is mine.

<sup>96</sup> The \**Saddharmapuṇḍarīkasūtra* explains quite clearly why the lifespan of Śākyamuni Buddha was short while asserting that the real lifespan of the Buddha is immeasurable. It states, “If the Buddha remains in the world for a long time, those persons with shallow virtue will fail to plant good roots but, living in poverty and lowliness, will become attached to the five desires and be caught in the net of deluded thoughts and imaginings. If they see that the Thus Come One is constantly in the world and never enters extinction, they will grow arrogant and selfish, or become discouraged and neglectful. They will fail to realize how difficult it is to encounter the Buddha and will not approach him with a respectful and reverent mind.” Burton Watson, (1993), 227. The author of the MPPŚ may have consulted the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka Sūtra* or have had this *sūtra* in mind.

<sup>97</sup> T12, 390a. 迦葉復言：如來云何名曰常住？如佛言曰：如燈滅已，無有方所，

如來亦爾。既滅度已，亦無方所。The translation is mine.

<sup>98</sup> T12, 382c-383a. 世尊，如佛所說，如如是等身，我悉不見，唯見無常，破壞微塵，雜食等身。何以故？如來當入於涅槃故。The translation is mine.

<sup>99</sup> T12, 596a.

<sup>100</sup> T12, 445c. 佛性即是如來，如來即是法，法即是常。The translation is mine.

<sup>101</sup> T12, 539b. 眾生佛性亦復如是，雖處五道受別異身，而是佛性常一無變。The translation is mine.

<sup>102</sup> Here the audience are the *dharmatākāya* bodhisattvas

<sup>103</sup> T25, 121c-122a. 復次，佛有二種身：一者法性身，二者父母生身，是法性身，滿十方虛空，無量無邊，色像端正，相好莊嚴，無量光明，無量音聲，聽法眾亦滿虛空，(此眾亦是法性身非生死人所得見也) 常出種種身、種種名號、種種生處、種種方便度眾生，常度一切，無須與息時。如是法性身佛，能度十方世界眾生。受諸罪報者，是生身佛，生身佛次第說法如人法，以有二種佛故，受諸罪無咎。The translation is mine.

<sup>104</sup> T25, 131c. 佛身二種：一神通變化身，二父母生身，父母生身受人法故不如天，是故應如人法問訊。The translation is mine.

<sup>105</sup> T25, 274a. 爲生身故，說三十二相，爲法身故，說無相。佛身以三十二相，八十隨形好而自莊嚴；法身以十力、四無所畏、四無礙智、十八不共法諸功德莊嚴。The translation is mine.

<sup>106</sup> T25, 278a-b. 而佛身有二種：一者真身，二者化身，眾生見佛真身，無願不滿，佛真身者，遍於虛空，光明遍照十方，說法音聲，亦遍十方，無量恒河沙等世界，滿中大眾，皆共聽法，說法不息，一時之頃，各隨所聞，而得解悟，如劫盡已。眾生行業因緣故，大雨澍下，間無斷絕，三大所不能制，惟有劫盡，十方風起，更互相對，能持此水。如是法性身佛，有所說法，除十住菩薩，三乘之人，皆不能持，惟有十住菩薩，不可思議方便智力，悉能聽受。眾生其有見法身佛，無有三毒及眾煩惱寒熱諸苦，一切皆滅，無願不滿。The translation is mine.

<sup>107</sup> T25, 303b. 佛有二種身：一者法性生身，二者隨世間身，世間身眷屬如先說，法性生身者，有無量無數阿僧祇一生補處菩薩侍從，所以者何？如《不可思議解脫經》說：‘佛欲生時，八萬四千一生補處菩薩在前導，菩薩從後而出，譬如陰雲籠月。’又如《法華經》說：‘從地踊出菩薩等，皆是內眷屬大眷屬，菩薩眷屬者。’ The translation is mine.

<sup>108</sup> T25, 313ba-b. 上已說有二種佛：一者法性生身佛，二者隨眾生優劣現化佛，爲法性生身佛故，說乃至聞名得度，爲隨眾生現身佛故，說雖共佛住，隨業因緣有墮地獄者。法性生身佛者，無事不濟，無願不滿，所以者何？於無量阿僧祇劫，積集一切善本功德，一切智慧，無礙具足，爲眾聖主，諸天及大菩薩希能見者。The translation is mine.

<sup>109</sup> T25, 683a. 佛有二種身：法身生身，於二身中法身爲大，法身大所益多故。The translation is mine.

<sup>110</sup> T25, 747a. 復次佛有二種身：一者法身，二者色身，法身是真佛，色身爲世諦故有。佛法身相上種種因緣，說諸法實相，是諸法實相，亦無來無去，是故說諸佛，無所從來，去亦無所至。The translation is mine.

<sup>111</sup> The two-body theory in the *Vibhāṣā* refers to the *dharmakāya* and the *rūpakāya* while the MPPŚ uses the term *nirmāṇakāya* instead of *rūpakāya*. This is because the author of the MPPŚ considered Śākyamuni as a transformation body only, but the

Sarvāstivādins considered that the historical Buddha attained enlightenment in this life, so to them a *rūpakāya* and not a *nirmāṇakāya*.

<sup>112</sup> T25, 303b. The translation is mine.

<sup>113</sup> T25, 274a. 佛法有二種：一者世諦，二者第一義諦，世諦故說三十二相，第一義諦故說無相。The translation is mine.

<sup>114</sup> T25, 274a. The sixteen active aspects of the Four Noble Truths (*ṣoḍāśa-ākāra*), which are sixteen ways of analyzing the meaning of the Four Noble Truths, include four ways for each noble truth. The first noble truth is analyzed as 1. containing the meanings of impermanence 無常 (*anitya*), 2. unsatisfactoriness 苦 (*duḥkha*), 3. emptiness 空 (*śūnya*), 4. and no-self 無我 (*anātmaka*). The second noble truth contains the implications of 5. the cause of suffering 因 (*hetu*), 6. gathering 集 (*samudaya*), 7. continuation 生 (*prabhava*) and 8. conditions 緣 (*pratyaya*). The third noble truth implies, 9. extinction of physical attachments 滅 (*nirodha*), 10. the calming of afflictions 靜 (*sānta*), 11. the sublimity of no discomfort 妙 (*praṇīta*) and 12. the escape from all difficult circumstances 離 (*nihsaraṇa*). Within the fourth noble truth are seen 13. the path to cessation 道 (*mārga*), 14. accordance with the correct principle 如 (*nyāya*), 15. activity leading to nirvana 行 (*pratipatti*), and 16. transcendence of life and death 出 (*nairyāṇika*).

<sup>115</sup> T25, 746b. 世諦故言佛說般若波羅蜜，第一義故說諸佛空，無來無去。如汝說清淨五眾和合故名爲佛，若和合故有，是即爲無。The translation is mine.

<sup>116</sup> T25, 126b.

<sup>117</sup> T25, 58c-59a. 如佛身無量，光明、音響亦復無量，戒、定、慧等諸佛功德，皆悉無量。The translation is mine.

<sup>118</sup> T25, 121b-c.

<sup>119</sup> T25, 340a.

<sup>120</sup> John J Makransky, (1997), 54-55.

<sup>121</sup> There are Chinese (T31, 589b-661c) and Tibetan translations of the MSA, and a Sanskrit version was found in Nepal and edited by the French scholar Sylvain Levi, who published it in 1907. The French translation by the same scholar was published in 1911. Since then there have been many Japanese scholars who have studied and translated it. E.g. Hakuju Ui: *A Study on the Mahāyānasūtrālamkāra*, Tokyo, 1979; Nobuchiyo Kotani: *A Study on the Mahāyānasūtrālamkāra*, Tokyo, 1984; Noriaki Hakamaya's Japanese translation of the MSA with introduction, Tokyo, 1993.

<sup>122</sup> T8, 455a. 我不復欲聞。是故說是皆非佛所說。餘外事耳。The translation is mine.

<sup>123</sup> E. Conze (1967), 178. *naitad buddhavacanam kavi-kṛtam kāvyam etat*. The *Aṣṭa*, xvii, 328.

<sup>124</sup> T13, 907a-b. 是語是何等說乎？是何從所得是語乎？是爲自合會作是語耳，是經非佛所說。(The translation is mine) The Chinese scholar Yinshun takes these two quotations as textual evidence for the traditional dispute regarding whether the Mahāyāna is the teaching of the Buddha. Yinshun, (1994), 1.

<sup>125</sup> “若四輩弟子得聞是經，言非正法。作如是說，是邪說，非如來說。” (T10.893c11-13); Cf. The *Mahāratnakūṭa Sūtra*. (T11.522b3-b21)

<sup>126</sup> T12.892c25 “言方等經皆是魔說，言摩訶衍者是諸黠慧正法刺劍，諸佛世尊皆當無常而說常住。

<sup>127</sup> “不信大乘，謂摩訶衍非佛所說。” The *Life of Vasubandhu* (T50.190c); cf.

Takakusu, J. (Tr.) *The Life of Vasubandhu. T'oung Pao Archive Series II:vol. V, 1904.p. 290.*

<sup>128</sup> “今去學此諸人不得出罽賓國,八結文句及毘婆沙文句亦悉不得出國,恐餘部及大乘污壞此正法.” *The Life of Vasubandhu* (T50.189a); cf. Takakusu, J. (Tr.) *The Life of Vasubandhu. T'oung Pao Archive Series II:vol. V, 1904. p. 279.*

<sup>129</sup> T31, 591a. 有人疑此大乘非佛所說,云何有此功德可得,我今決彼疑網,成立大乘真是佛說。The translation is mine.

<sup>130</sup> Nagao Gadjin (1961), part two, 285. Gadjin mentions twenty-eight sources cited in the *Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkāra*, twenty-one are given titles and seven are just mentioned as the *āgama*, *sūtra* or *yathoktam bhagavatā*.

<sup>131</sup> The Chinese and Tibetan translations also have this sentence, but the Chinese translation omits the word ‘*bodhisattva*’: “Here ends the *Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkāra* that was told when it was pure.” Tibetan translation is: “theg pa chen po mdo sde’I rgyan byan chub sems dpa’ chen po rtogs pa rnam par byang bas bshad palas”. Cited from Shi Shanyin, (1999.3) note 10.

<sup>132</sup> See S. Takeuchi (1983), 170, John Makransky (1997), 65.

<sup>133</sup> Sylvain Levi, who found the Sanskrit text in Nepal, edited and translated it into French, is of the opinion that both the text and the *bhāṣya* were composed by Asaṅga (*Asaṅga, Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkāra, Exposé de la Doctrine du Grand Véhicule selon le System Yogācāra*, the Sanskrit text was published in 1907). The reason for which Levi believed so is that Prabhākaramitra, who made the Chinese translation in 630-633 CE, is the earliest person who mentions Asaṅga as the author of both the text and the *bhāṣya*. However, Xuanzang, nearly half a century later, stated that it was Maitreya who inspired Asaṅga to compose it while the Tibetan translation was made much later by the Indian Śākyasiṃha and the Tibetan dPal brcogs (See Shi Shanyin, (1999), ‘A Study on the *Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkāra*’, in the *Chung-Hwa Buddhist Journal*, III, 24). Moreover, one ought to consider the Chinese catalogue *Zhiyuanlu* (《至元法寶勘同總錄》A general catalogue of the Dharmaratna or Buddhist sacred books collected in Zhiyuan period, under the Yuan dynasty), compiled by *śrāmaṇa* Phagspa, an imperial adviser of the Yuan Dynasty, along with other learned monks with the imperial patronage. This catalogue was published in 1287 CE, and both the text and the *bhāṣya* are attributed to Asaṅga.

Japanese scholar Hakuju Ui is of the opinion that the text is by Maitreya and the *bhāṣya* by Vasubandhu as he argues that Maitreya was a historical figure who lived between 270-350 CE (H. Nakamura, (1996), 256). Hakuju Ui thinks that Asaṅga, who heard it from Maitreya, taught it to Vasubandhu who in turn wrote the *bhāṣya* and therefore Asaṅga is neither the author nor the commentator. However, he regards the *bhāṣya* as having been composed by Vasubandhu while staying with his brother Asaṅga. Erich Frauwallner is also of the same opinion as Hakuju Ui that the text is by Maitreya. He has also argued that had Asaṅga considered himself inspired in a vision by the Bodhisattva Maitreya he would have written not philosophical treatises (*śāstra*) but rather *sūtras*. But since these three texts, the *Madhyāntavibhāga*, the *Dharmadharmatāvibhāga* and the MSA, are unitary philosophical works, and differ somewhat from works known to be by Asaṅga, this indicates an authorship by Maitreyanātha rather than by the Bodhisattva Maitreya (Paul Williams, (1989), 81). But other scholars like Lamotte, Noriaki Hakamaya, Nobuchiyo Kotani and Takashi Yamaguchi think differently, believing that the text is by Asaṅga and the *bhāṣya* is by Vasubandhu.

<sup>134</sup> Cited from Shi Shanyin, (1999) 24. Hakamaya regards Maitreya as a legendary person so he takes Asaṅga as the founder of Yogācāra. See his Japanese translation of the MSA, 1993, Tokyo, 18f. Kotani, who made a comparative study of the language and thought of both Asaṅga and Vasubandhu, asserts that Asaṅga composed the text and Vasubandhu the commentary. See his *A Study of the Mahāyānasūtrālamkāra* in Japanese, 1984, Tokyo, 10ff. Yamaguchi, on the basis of the first verse in the MSA, says that the texts were composed by Asaṅga with the supernatural power of the great Bodhisattva. See also Kotani's *Study*, 14.

<sup>135</sup> Scholars like J. Takakusu (1905), E. Frauwallner (1951) and other Japanese scholars have studied the dates of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu. The dates of Asaṅga are roughly regarded as 310-390 CE and the dates of Vasubandhu approximately 320-400 CE. See H. Nakamura, (1996), 264, 268.

<sup>136</sup> *The Life of Vasubandhu* was translated into Chinese by Paramārtha, T50, 188b-c. This was again translated into English by J. Takakusu, (1904), 'The life of Vasubandhu by Paramārtha (499-569 CE)' *T'oung Pao Archive*, serie II, V, p269-296, 620. J. Takakusu also made a study on the life and dates of Vasubandhu, 'A study of Paramārtha's life of Vasubandhu and the date of Vasubandhu', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1905, p33-53. Xuanzang also gives a brief account of the lives of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu in his *Datangxiyuji* (the Record of the Western Regions), T51, 896b-897a.

<sup>137</sup> The MSA itself quoted many Mahāyāna *sūtras* and *śāstras* which were already in existence.

<sup>138</sup> É. Lamotte, (1990), 125. This Sarvāstivādin scholar is the same as the author of the MPPŚ, Nāgārjuna according to Chinese tradition. But the authorship of the MPPŚ is a controversy among scholars.

<sup>139</sup> The MSA, T31, 591a-593a: and all three Chinese translations of the *Mahāyānasamgraha* (T31, 97a-b, 113b-c, 132c-133a) record: "An interpretation of the scriptures such as this demonstrates that the truths of the Great Vehicle are the very words of the Buddha." Cited from John P. Keenan's English translation of *The Summary of the Great Vehicle*, 11.

<sup>140</sup> Shih Hengching (1996), 35.

<sup>141</sup> Shih Hengching, *op. cit.*, 35.

<sup>142</sup> Vasubandhu "was versed in all the principles of the eighteen schools (of Buddhism) and thoroughly understood the Hīnayāna." "法師既遍通十八部義,妙解小乘." *The Life of Vasubandhu* (T50.190c); Paramārtha, tr. by J. Takakusu, 'The life of Vasubandhu', *T'oung Pao Archive* series II:vol. V, 1904, p. 290.

<sup>143</sup> T31, 606b.

<sup>144</sup> T31, 372b-c.

<sup>145</sup> In the MSA, the term *sambhogakāya* is translated in two ways: "the body of food" which is a *literary* translation and "the body of enjoyment". In the three Chinese translations of the *Mahāyānasamgraha* of Asaṅga, Buddhaśānta translated it as "the reward body", Paramārtha "the body of enjoyment" and Xuanzang "the body of enjoyment". In the three Chinese translations of the *Mahāyānasamgrahabhāṣya* of Vasubandhu, Gupta and Xingju translated it as "the body of enjoyment", Paramārtha "the body of transformation" and Xuanzang "the body of enjoyment". It is noticed that Paramārtha's translation is not consistent, but Xuanzang consistently translated it as "the body of enjoyment".

<sup>146</sup> John Makransky, (1997), 105-106.

<sup>147</sup> T31, 606b.

<sup>148</sup> Monier Williams, 1152, 1178. Here *sambuddha* is translated as “well perceived, perfectly known or understood”.

<sup>149</sup> According to Monier Williams, p.767, “*bhoga*” is derived from the verb “*bhuj*” meaning to eat.

<sup>150</sup> T26, 326a. 又受用身略有二種，一自受用，三無數劫修所成故，二他受用，為諸菩薩受法樂故。The translation is mine.

<sup>151</sup> T31, 57c-58a. 二受用身，此有二種。一自受用，謂諸如來三無數劫修集無量福慧資糧所起無邊真實功德，及極圓淨常遍色身，相續湛然盡未來際恒自受用廣大法樂。二他受用，謂諸如來由平等智示現微妙淨功德身，居純淨土，為住十地諸菩薩眾現大神通轉正法輪決眾疑網令彼受用大乘法樂。合此二種名受用身。The translation is mine.

## Chapter Six

### The Origin and Development of the *Nirmāṇakāya*

#### 1. The Origin of the *Nirmāṇakāya*

The idea of the *nirmāṇakāya* most likely has its origin in the idea of the mind-made body (*manomayakāya*) found in early Buddhism. Both are magically created through supernatural power (Skt: *ṛddhi*, Pāli: *iddhi*).<sup>1</sup> The mind-made body is mentioned at least three times in the *Nikāyas*, and it always precedes the description of the six supernatural powers (*abhiññā*) except in the *Poṭṭhapādasutta*. In both the *Sāmaññaphalasutta* of the *Dīghanikāya* and the *Mahāsakuludāyisutta* of the *Majjhimanikāya*, it is stated that a meditator concentrated with a pure mind will be able to create from his coarse physical body another refined body. This created body is made of mind (*manomaya*), its form having all his original body's limbs, and complete with all faculties.<sup>2</sup> The process of mentally creating another body from one's own is compared to the act of drawing out a reed from its sheath, a sword from its scabbard, or a snake from its slough. The *Visuddhimagga* explains that if a meditator wishes to create a mind-made body, he should emerge from the basic fourth *jhāna* (Skt. *dhyāna*), advert to his own body, and resolve that the body is hollow.<sup>3</sup> This ability to double oneself is named 'the knowledge of the mind-made body (*manomaya iddhi ñāṇa*)' in the *suttas*. So it is a creation by the supernatural power of *iddhi* attained through the practices of *jhāna*. This is also mentioned in the Chinese \**Dūrghāgama*, but in a different *sūtra* which corresponds to the *Ambatthasutta* of the *Dīghanikāya*.<sup>4</sup> The description of supernatural power and even the similes used are exactly the same as that of the Pāli version.

The *Poṭṭhapādasutta* of the *Dīghanikāya* also mentions the mind-made body as one of the three modes of existence, namely: the material (*oḷārika*), the immaterial (*manomaya*), and the formless (*arūpo atta-paṭilābho*).<sup>5</sup> The mind-made body belongs to the second mode. It possesses a form with all greater and lesser limbs complete,



and all organs perfect. Buddhaghosa explains that this second mode of existence corresponds to the realm of form (*rūpabhava*), which in turn is equated to the sixteen worlds of the Brahman gods, and is attained by the practice of the four ecstasies (*jhāna*).<sup>6</sup> However, it seems that this kind of mind-made body is not produced by the power of *iddhi*, but by virtue of conduct.

The power of *iddhi* is also the first of the six kinds of direct knowledge (*abhiññā*), known as the *iddhividhañāṇa*, the knowledge of the modes of supernatural power.<sup>7</sup> Under the power of *iddhi*, eight kinds of magic power are mentioned and the first one is “having been one, he becomes many; having been many he becomes one”.<sup>8</sup> In the *Visuddhimagga*, Buddhaghosa explains that to exercise this kind of psychic power, the meditator should enter the fourth *jhāna* as a basis for direct knowledge and emerge from it. Then he must resolve on the number of forms he wishes to create. He again attains the fourth *jhāna*, emerges and resolves. Thus, he can create as many as ‘a hundred, or a thousand forms’ akin to himself and perform the same action.<sup>9</sup> This magical power of self-multiplication as the first of the six supernatural powers (*abhijñā*) is also mentioned in both the Chinese \**Dīrghāgama* and the \**Ekottarāgama*.<sup>10</sup>

According to the *Sāmaññaphalasutta*, the attainment of the first direct knowledge is higher than the attainment of ‘the knowledge of the mind-made body (*manomaya iddhi ñāṇa*)’.<sup>11</sup> This is why the *suttas* always mention the mind-made body first as the compilers describe spiritual attainments in ascending order. The *iddhi* power of the mind-made body can create only one body at a time while the *iddhi* power of the *iddhividhañāṇa* can create as many bodies as one wishes. Of course, the *suttas* only mention ‘many’ and not ‘a hundred, or a thousand’ that are mentioned in the post-canonical work of the *Visuddhimagga*.

The *Paṭisambhidāmagga* mentions another supernatural power of *iddhi* which is named the power of transformation (*vikubhaṇa iddhi*). The text reads as follows:

“He abandons his normal appearance and shows the appearance of a boy or the

appearance of a *nāga*, the appearance of a *supanna* (winged demon), the appearance of an *aśura*, the appearance of the ruler (Indra) of the gods, the appearance of some deities, the appearance of a Brahmā, the appearance of the sea, the appearance of a rock, the appearance of a lion, the appearance of a tiger, the appearance of a leopard; he manifests as an elephant, he manifests as a horse, he manifests as a chariot, he manifests as a foot soldier, or he manifests as a manifold military array.”<sup>12</sup>

This is obviously a further development on the basis of the *iddhi* power discussed above, since through the power of transformation (*vikubhaṇa iddhi*) the meditator not only creates many human forms, but also transform himself into whatever forms he wishes, for example a god or a lion. This kind of supernatural power of self-transformation is not explicitly mentioned in the *suttas*, but it is implied in certain quotations. The *Mahāparinibbāṇasutta*, for instance, states that the Buddha used this power to transform himself into the appearance of whatever audiences he was addressing, such as Brahmins, householders, various categories of devas.<sup>13</sup> This idea is much closer to the idea of *nirmāṇakāya*. However, this *iddhi* is not exclusive to the Buddha alone, but to all his disciples as well as the *śrāmaṇas* of other Indian traditions with some attainment of *jhāna*. Devadatta, for instance, is mentioned in the *\*Ekottarāgama* as having changed himself into the form of a small boy through the power of *ṛddhi* and then changed back to his original form again in the presence of prince Ajātaśatru.<sup>14</sup>

It should be noted that in the *Yogācārabhūmiśāstra*, the *nirmāṇakāya* is also described in the first of six supernatural powers (*abhijñā*). The text states that the Buddhas and bodhisattvas are able to manifest themselves in different bodies (*nirmāṇakāya*), different voices and different objects for the sake of sentient beings.<sup>15</sup> In the *\*Buddhagoṭrasāstra*, Vasubandhu also states that the *nirmāṇakāya* is manifested through *dhyāna*.<sup>16</sup> There is an important similarity between the *nirmāṇakāya* and the magically created body, whether it be a mind-made body or a creation of the first of the six *abhijñās*. They are all produced by the supernatural

power of *ṛddhi* obtained through *dhyāna*. In fact, the concept of the *nirmāṇakāya* includes all the variations of the created bodies found in early Buddhism: self-multiplication and self-transformation. Through self-multiplication, the Buddha can create infinite *nirmāṇakāyas* in the form of a Buddha and through self-transformation, he can transform himself into whatever form he wishes to be, such as *nirmāṇakāyas* in animal forms.

The supernatural power of *ṛddhi*, which plays a key role in creating magical bodies, is still mundane. In early Buddhism the *rūpakāya* of the Buddha was never conceived as a product of the power of *ṛddhi*. Even the modern Theravādins and the Sarvāstivādins of yore never thought that Śākyamuni was magically arisen. It is perhaps the Mahāsāṃghikas who, taking the idea of the mind-made body, first conceived the idea that the historical Buddha, as a *rūpakāya*, was a magical creation for the sake of sentient beings, while the true Buddha was eternal and omniscient.

The *\*Lokānuvartanasūtra* states that every act of the Buddha is a display for the sake of sentient beings. In reality the Buddha is unaffected by any worldly conditions such as illness and other forms of suffering. It mentions specifically that the Buddha can manifest himself in numerous bodies and appear in countless Buddha-lands, but the body of the Buddha neither increases nor decreases.<sup>17</sup> Therefore, with Mahāsāṃghikas, terms like *rūpakāya* and *nirmāṇakāya* have a congruent reference. However, there is no mention of the term *nirmāṇakāya* in the literature of the Mahāsāṃghika.

## 2. The Development of the Nirmāṇakāya

### 1. The formulation of the nirmāṇakāya

From the very beginning, the Mahāyānists accepted the Buddhology of the Mahāsāṃghikas in its entirety, as shown in chapter four. However, early Mahāyāna *sūtras* such as the *\*Prajñāpāramitā*, rarely use terms such as *rūpakāya* or

*nirmāṇakāya*. The *Aṣṭa*, for instance, narrates that bodhisattva Sadāprarudita saw a magically produced Buddha with a wonderful body endowed with thirty-two marks when he was cultivating the *prajñāpāramitā*. That Buddha instructed him to go to the east to learn the *prajñāpāramitā*, where he met the bodhisattva Dharmodgata.<sup>18</sup> Here the idea of *nirmāṇakāya* is expressed but the term is not used. In the Chinese translation of the *\*Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*, there is a discussion between the Buddha and Subhūti concerning the created Tathāgata.<sup>19</sup> Subhūti asked the Buddha what was the difference between the real Tathāgata and the created one. The Buddha taught Subhūti that there was no difference as they both performed the same function. Subhūti next asked whether the created Tathāgata functioned independently. The Buddha replied in confirmation and to illustrate this point, the Buddha told Subhūti that there was a Buddha named Suśānta in the past. Suśānta magically created another Buddha who lived for a *kalpa* instructing people in bodhisattva practice after he entered *parinirvāṇa*. People did not know that it was only a magically created Buddha. Subhūti asked whether there was a difference of merit gained through making offerings to the real Tathāgata and to the created one. The Buddha replied that there was no difference as all merits lead to the cessation of suffering.

The important point in this dialogue is that the magically manifested Buddha performs acts for the sake of sentient beings in exactly the same way as the actual Buddha. These acts for the sake of sentient beings are called in later Mahāyāna *sūtras* the *karma* of the Buddha performed through the *nirmāṇakāya*. Thus the concept of the *nirmāṇakāya* was formulated while being called a created Buddha, and not a created body. It was not until the third century with Dharmarakṣa's translation of the *Rulaixingxianjing* (Sūtra on the Appearance of the Tathāgata), which corresponds to chapter thirty-two (on the appearance of the Ratnarājā Tathāgata) of the *\*Avataṃsaka*, that the term *nirmāṇakāya* with full connotations appeared.<sup>20</sup>

The text states: "Tathāgata, representing ultimate reality, is the great king of

Dharma by his supreme wisdom, and always enjoys the pleasure of the Dharma through manifestations. The nature (of the Tathāgata) is quiescence spread all over the cosmos (*dharmadhātu*). The cloud of the *dharmakāya* pervades everywhere and manifests (in different bodies) in accordance with the inclination of sentient beings. Sometimes, he manifests the body of supreme enlightenment for sentient beings and pours down the rain of Dharma. He also manifests the *nirmāṇakāya* and showers the Dharma rain. He may also manifest the constructed body (*samāropa?*) and bring down the Dharma rain. Or he manifests the *rūpakāya* and rains various grades of the Dharma rain. Or he manifests the body of merit and rains the Dharma rain. Or he manifests the wisdom body and rains, or manifests a body in accordance with the situation (of the beings to be saved).”<sup>21</sup>

This passage is important in that it describes the Buddhakāya as having two aspects. Firstly, it includes the *dharmakāya* as the real Buddha pervading the cosmos. Secondly, it includes the various kinds of bodies manifested in accordance with the inclination of sentient beings. Concerning the manifested bodies, the text lists several types, the *nirmāṇakāya* being one of them. It should be noted that the *Rulaixingxianjing* is perhaps one of the earliest texts in which the term *nirmāṇakāya* is mentioned because the terms used for the manifested bodies are not merged into one fixed concept. But among them, the term *nirmāṇakāya* is the most appropriate concept because it encompasses all the variations and differences of the manifested bodies. The idea of the manifested bodies developed gradually and matured finally in the *\*Avataṃsaka* where the ten Buddha bodies were formulated. This will be discussed in the next chapter.

In the *\*Avataṃsaka*, the term *nirmāṇakāya* became widely used and its ramifications became clear. For instance, the *sūtra* states: “When Buddhas appear in different worlds, they establish sentient beings in the reality of truth through the Door of Wisdom by manifesting inconceivable Tathāgata *nirmāṇakāyas* and illuminating infinite Buddha lands and Dharma realms.”<sup>22</sup> “The Tathāgata has a mark of the great

man named the Wheel Cloud of Pure Dharma Illumination. ... Immeasurable *nirmāṇakāyas* of the Tathāgata are born from it.”<sup>23</sup> The Buddha, according to the \**Avataṃsaka*, can manifest an ocean of *nirmāṇakāyas* even from one pore of his bodily hairs, which fill up the whole universe.<sup>24</sup> Each of these inconceivable *nirmāṇakāya* manifestations is endowed with infinite light of wisdom as well as all the major marks just like the great bodhisattva Samantabhadra.<sup>25</sup> The *nirmāṇakāyas* always expound Dharma according to the inclination of sentient beings.<sup>26</sup> Sometimes they teach sentient beings various types of bodhisattva practice through examples and even manifest great *nirvāṇa* for the sake of suffering beings.<sup>27</sup> In another section, the \**Avataṃsaka* states that the Buddha can create as many bodies as atoms of infinite Buddha lands from each pore of his bodily hairs at every thought moment. These *nirmāṇakāyas* of the Tathāgata turn the Wheel of Dharma like a wheel of fire.<sup>28</sup> They eliminate all doubts of sentient beings by taming and adorning them with Mahāyāna wisdom. They illuminate all *dharmas*, open up all the treasure of Dharma, preach bodhisattva practices, and make complete the sun of wisdom of the Mahāyāna.

In the chapter on the Entry into the Universe of the \**Avataṃsaka*, the *sūtra* states that Śākyamuni was Vairocana Buddha who descended from Tuṣita heaven and took abode in the womb of Mahāmāyā.<sup>29</sup> The \**Brahmajālasūtra*, which is the Vinaya text of bodhisattvas, states that Śākyamuni was originally named Vairocana abiding in a lotus platform with a thousand petals. He manifests a thousand Śākyamunis, one in each of the petal worlds in which there are a hundred million Sumerus, a hundred million suns and moons, a hundred million Jambudvīpas and a hundred million Śākyamunis sitting under the *bodhi* tree preaching the bodhisattva doctrine.<sup>30</sup> In this *sūtra*, Śākyamuni is considered the *nirmāṇakāya* of Vairocana. As previously discussed, the Mahāsāṃghikas have already considered that Śākyamuni is not the real Buddha but a manifestation through skilful means for the sake of sentient beings. It is only in the \**Brahmajālasūtra* that Śākyamuni is named the *nirmāṇakāya*. The \**Mahāprajñāpāramitāśāstra* expresses this point in explicit terms. It states, “when a

bodhisattva attains complete enlightenment, he can manifest a short or long lifespan in accordance with the lifespan of beings to be saved in various lands. Śākyamuni, for instance, lived only around a hundred years in this Sahā World, while in the World of Adornment he lived for seven hundred *asaṃkhyeya kalpas*.<sup>31</sup> Śākyamuni is thus considered as the *nirmāṇakāya* of Vairocana while Vairocana is considered as the *saṃbhogakāya* of Śākyamuni. Quoting from a *sūtra* entitled the *Chapter on the Thirty Third Heaven*,<sup>32</sup> the *śāstra* states that in the east there are numerous Buddhas in different worlds, some are adorned with gold and full of *arhats*, some adorned with silver and full of *pratyekabuddhas*, while some are adorned with the seven precious objects and full of irreversible bodhisattvas. All these Buddhas are different manifestations of Śākyamuni.<sup>33</sup>

The relationship between the *dharmakāya* and the *nirmāṇakāya* is explained in the *\*Avataṃsaka* as the moon and its reflections in different waters.<sup>34</sup> The moon is only one, but its reflections are numerous. First, although the *dharmakāya* is the same in all Buddhas, the *nirmāṇakāya* can be numerous and manifests in various forms in different Buddha lands. Second, the *dharmakāya* is always in quiescence without birth and death, rise and fall, but the *nirmāṇakāya* displays various acts such as birth, enlightenment, and *parinirvāṇa* for the sake of sentient beings. Third, the *dharmakāya* does not differentiate and is equal to all, but the *nirmāṇakāyas* are manifested in accordance with the inclination of sentient beings. The *nirmāṇakāya* can have long or short lifespans, possess different light, and appear in different forms. For instance, Amitābha has an infinite lifespan and possesses limitless light while Śākyamuni lived only eighty years on earth.<sup>35</sup> The *nirmāṇakāya* is thus a channel through which the *dharmakāya*, the real Buddha in Mahāyāna Buddhism, performs the Buddha activities (*karma*) by skilful means.

The *\*Saṃdhinirmocanasūtra*, along the line of thought of the *\*Avataṃsaka*, further explains that the *nirmāṇakāya* is the reflection of the light of wisdom of the *dharmakāya* which is attained through the practice of the perfections (*pāramitā*) and

skilful means. But *śrāvakas* and *pratyekabuddhas*, who have only the body of *vimokṣa*, do not have such attributes.<sup>36</sup> Here, it is in the \**Samdhinirmocanasūtra* that the distinction is made between the Buddhas and the *śrāvakas* and the *pratyekabuddhas* concerning the *nirmāṇakāya*. It is only the Buddhas who possess *nirmāṇakāyas*, in contrast with the *śrāvakas* and *pratyekabuddhas* because they do not have such great merit.

## 2. The development of the *nirmāṇakāya*

After its formation, the concept of the *nirmāṇakāya* was further developed mainly by the Yogācāra School. The \**Samdhinirmocanasūtra*, which is a major text of this school, explains that the characteristic of the *nirmāṇakāya* is its function in the preservation of the Dharma in the world through skilful means.<sup>37</sup> Through *nirmāṇakāyas*, all Tathāgatas perform Buddha deeds of preaching the Dharma to liberate sentient beings in conformity with the ways of the world. The *nirmāṇakāya* is manifested in the world in the following ways: entering the womb, being born in the family of a king or a family with great merit, indulging in desire, leaving home, practising asceticism, and attaining perfect enlightenment after abandoning asceticism. It is obvious that the *sūtra* takes the life of Śākyamuni, the historical Buddha, as an example to illustrate the skilful means of the *nirmāṇakāya*.

The \**Yogācārabhūmiśāstra* explains the manifestations of the *nirmāṇakāya* in detail and states that the Buddhas and bodhisattvas perform activities for sentient beings in three ways through magically produced bodies, objects and voices.<sup>38</sup> Firstly, the Buddhas and bodhisattvas can manifest various forms of *nirmāṇakāyas* in infinite worlds of the ten directions to benefit countless sentient beings. Some *nirmāṇakāyas* preserve the Dharma by teaching it, while others disappear after the completion of the activities of maturing beings spiritually. Secondly, Buddhas and bodhisattvas can produce various objects miraculously, such as food, cloth, vehicles, and even jade for sentient beings to enjoy. Thirdly, Buddhas and bodhisattvas can manifest voices



miraculously either through *nirmāṇakāyas*, through the air, or from any inanimate object. These voices always teach sentient beings the Dharma that not only augments pure faith in the ignorant, but also makes indolent people remorseful and practise diligently.

One may feel that there is not much difference between the *dharmakāya* and the *nirmāṇakāya* since the latter is only a reflection of the former. Hence there is no need for the existence of a *nirmāṇakāya*. It is probably to refute this kind of thought that Asaṅga lists eight reasons for the existence of the *nirmāṇakāya* in his *Mahāyānasamgraha*. If there is no *nirmāṇakāya*, (1) it is not possible for those bodhisattvas who have long since obtained irreversible concentration to be born in Tuṣita heaven or among men. (2) It is not possible that those bodhisattvas who have long since remembered their previous births should not have complete understanding of writing, calculation, mathematics, illustrations, crafts, scholarship, and the enjoyment of and indulgence of sensual desire. (3) It is not possible that those who have long since understood the difference between good and bad presentations of doctrines should take heretics as their masters. (4) It is not possible that those who have understood the excellent doctrine concerning the path of the three vehicles should practice asceticism. (5) It is not possible that, upon leaving behind a hundred million Jambudvīpas, a bodhisattva should realise complete awakening and set in motion the wheel of doctrine at only a single location. (6) If, without manifesting the skilful method of complete awakening, a bodhisattva were to perform the activities of a Buddha in the other Jambudvīpas by means of transformation bodies, then he might also attain complete awakening in Tuṣita heaven. (7) Why can one not admit that a Buddha appears equally in all Jambudvīpas at the same time? No sacred text or argument invalidates this assertion. (8) The doctrine of a multiplicity of transformation bodies does not contradict the sacred text, which says that two Tathāgatas do not arise in the same world since the term world in the text indicates the four continents of a single Jambudvīpa and not a trichiliocosm.<sup>39</sup>

The first five reasons provide a summary of the career of the historical Buddha, while the last three reasons reflect a debate on two issues. These have been pointed out by Paul Griffiths and others, and consist of the multiplicity of Buddhas and reconciliation of it with the tradition that there is only one Buddha in one world-system at a given time. This, in fact, reflects the debate on Mahāyāna Buddhology between the Mahāyānists and the Sarvāstivādins, as discussed in chapter four. The Hīnayānists refused to accept the idea that Śākyamuni was only a *nirmāṇakāya* while the Buddha is transcendental. This debate is also reflected in another discussion concerning the *nirmāṇakāya*.

Asaṅga lists six reasons in his *Mahāyānasamgraha* explaining why Buddhas do not remain permanently in their *nirmāṇakāyas*, (1) On completion of their activities in delivering sentient beings who need to be brought to maturity. (2) To prevent a lack of desire for cessation caused by desire for the Buddha's eternal body. (3) To prevent disrespect towards the Buddha caused by lack of understanding of the teaching of the profound doctrine. (4) To arouse longing for the Buddha, lest those who see him continually take him for granted. (5) To induce sentient beings to develop personal effort as they no longer have the teacher among them. (6) To induce those under training to reach maturity quickly by not abandoning their own efforts.<sup>40</sup>

These reasons are actually a continuous argument to support the statement that the *nirmāṇakāya* is different from the *dharmakāya*. The *Mahāyānasamgraha* explains that it is not possible that Buddhas enter *parinirvāṇa* without working for sentient beings after enlightenment because it contradicts their original vows and practices. Buddhas made vows at their initial stage as bodhisattvas to pledge to benefit sentient beings. Therefore the *nirmāṇakāya* is a necessary means for Buddhas to perform such activities as pledged and appear repeatedly in the world for the benefit of sentient beings.<sup>41</sup> According to the *Mahāyānasamgraha*, the *nirmāṇakāya* performs eight acts in the world in order to benefit sentient beings. They include descending from Tuṣita heaven, being born, indulging in desire, leaving home, practising various forms of

asceticism, attaining great enlightenment, turning the wheel of Dharma, and entering *parinirvāṇa*.<sup>42</sup>

In his *\*Buddhagotraśāstra*, Vasubandhu states that the *nirmāṇakāya* has great compassion (*mahākaruṇā*) as its essence, ecstasy (*dhyāna*) as the basis for manifestation, and five kinds of capability through wisdom (*prajñā*). The five kinds of capability are the following: (1) making sentient beings feel aversion to *saṃsāra*, (2) facilitating their entry into the noble path, (3) making them abandon their attachment, (4) making them believe in the great Dharma and (5) making predictions (*vyākaraṇa*) on their great enlightenment (*bodhi*).<sup>43</sup> In this text, it says that Buddhas manifest fourteen acts in the defiled world through the *nirmāṇakāya*. These consist of their different births (*jātaka*), ascending and descending from the Tuṣita heaven, entering the womb, taking birth, learning skills, being a playful boy, leaving home, practising asceticism, coming to the *bodhi* tree, defeating Māra, attaining enlightenment, turning the wheel of Dharma, entering *parinirvāṇa*. These are the activities of the *nirmāṇakāya* for the maturity of sentient beings. It is clear that these fourteen activities are a further expansion of the eight acts in the *Mahāyānasamgraha*. It is modelled after the life of Śākyamuni who is considered as a *nirmāṇakāya* by the Mahāyānists.

In the same work, Vasubandhu also states that the *nirmāṇakāya* has three aspects. (1) It has a characteristic like the reflections of the moon in different waters. (2) It is produced by the power (of *dhyāna*) through the original vows. (3) It has a beginning as well as an end, for the *nirmāṇakāya* is manifested in accordance with specific conditions.<sup>44</sup>

After the formulation of the *trikāya* theory, the concept of the *nirmāṇakāya* was further developed by assimilating the ideas of Buddha lands and the bodhisattva ideal. The *nirmāṇakāya* is described as living in either a pure or impure land, for the maturity of ordinary people, *śrāvakas*, *pratyekabuddhas*, as well as bodhisattvas who have not yet entered into the *bhūmis*. The *\*Buddhabhūmisūtraśāstra* states that the

*nirmāṇakāya* has the characteristic of magical manifestation and it has the mastery of transformation through which all altruistic acts are accomplished. Produced by pure *karma*, the *nirmāṇakāya* lives in either pure or impure lands, manifests in various forms and teaches various *dharmas*. It matures ordinary bodhisattvas, *śrāvakas*, *pratyekabuddhas* and sentient beings. It allows them to enter the *bhūmis* and leave the three realms (*dhātu*) as well as the suffering states (*durgati*).<sup>45</sup>

The \**Vijñaptimātratāsiddhiśāstra* also states, “The *nirmāṇakāya* means that the Tathāgatas, through the Wisdom of Fulfilment of Deeds (*krtyānuṣṭhāna-jñāna*), manifests infinite bodies of transformation in accordance with the types (of sentient beings). It lives in either pure or impure land, preaches the Dharma and displays supernatural powers for bodhisattvas who have not entered the *bhūmis*, *śrāvakas*, and *pratyekabuddhas* as well as sentient beings in accordance with their inclinations. It benefits them with various things.”<sup>46</sup>

Two kinds of *nirmāṇakāya* are distinguished in the above descriptions. (1) The *nirmāṇakāya* in the form of a Buddha with thirty-two major and eighty minor marks for saving *prthagjanas* (human beings), *śrāvakas*, *pratyekabuddhas* as well as bodhisattvas who have not entered the *bhūmis*. (2) The *nirmāṇakāya* in the form of an ordinary human being, an animal, or even a ghost for liberating different forms of sentient beings. The best example for the first type of the *nirmāṇakāya* is Śākyamuni Buddha and it is in reference to this type that the eight or fourteen acts are mentioned. The examples for the second type are found in the *Jātaka* stories where the Buddha appears in appropriate forms to save various beings. The ancient Chinese masters named these two kinds of *nirmāṇakāya* the assumed body (應身 *Yingsheng* in Chinese), and the magically produced body (化身 *Huasheng* in Chinese) respectively.<sup>47</sup> The magically produced body, according to the \**Suvarṇaprabhāsottamasūtra*, entails that the Tathāgata manifests various bodies in accordance with the mentality, activity, and the realms of sentient beings in appropriate places, times, and doctrines.<sup>48</sup> The term ‘assumed body’ occasionally

means the body of enjoyment for the great bodhisattvas (*parasambhogakāya*). Therefore, the assumed body can be either a *nirmāṇakāya* or a *sambhogakāya* according to the audience to which the Buddha appears. The Buddha appears in the form of the *sambhogakāya* before the assembly of bodhisattvas who have already entered into the *bhūmis* and in the form of a *nirmāṇakāya* before other audiences.

In summary, the *nirmāṇakāya* probably originated from the idea of the mind-made body (*manomayakāya*) found in early Buddhism. This idea was first taken up by the Mahāsāṃghikas when they argued that Śākyamuni was a manifestation in order to liberate sentient beings and the Buddha is far beyond worldly conditions. The Mahāyānist, accepting the Buddhology of the Mahāsāṃghikas in its entirety, further developed this idea and formulated the concept of the *nirmāṇakāya*. They argued that the *dharmakāya* is the Buddha. Śākyamuni was only a *nirmāṇakāya* manifested in the world out of compassion for sentient beings. Thus, the concept of the *nirmāṇakāya* has the following aspects. It has the *dharmakāya* as its support, great compassion as its essence and transformation as its activity. It manifests itself in either a pure or impure land through the power of concentration (*dhyāna*) for the sake of maturing sentient beings, *śrāvakas*, *pratyekabuddhas*, as well as bodhisattvas who have not entered the *bhūmis*. It is manifested in different forms in accordance with the inclinations of the audience to be addressed and its context. It performs eight or fourteen acts in accordance with the state of the world if the *nirmāṇakāya* is in the form of a Buddha.

<sup>1</sup> Some scholars like Teresina Rowell are of the opinion that the *nirmāṇakāya* originated from the idea of the magical power (*ṛddhi*) of the Buddha, by which the latter could multiply himself as many times as sought. Teresina Rowell (1935), 135.

<sup>2</sup> D i, 77. M ii, 17-18.

<sup>3</sup> Vsm. 342.

<sup>4</sup> T1, 85c.

<sup>5</sup> D i, 195. The belief in the three modes of personalities is pre-Buddhistic. It was a view commonly accepted in India. Poṭṭhapāda himself admitted this in the sutta. However, from the Buddhist point of view, these modes of existence are purely temporary. They are the fleeting union of qualities that temporarily comprise an

unstable individuality. This was pointed out by Rhys Davids in a footnote of his translation of the sutta.

<sup>6</sup> Vsm. ii, 380.

<sup>7</sup> The six kinds of direct knowledge are supernatural power, the divine ear, the ability to read the minds of others, the recollection of past lives, and the divine eye. They are mentioned in *Sāmaññaphalasutta*, D i, 77-78, *Ākankheyyasutta*, M i, 34, *Mahāvaccagottasutta*, M i, 494, *Mahāsakuludāyisutta*, M ii, 17, *Gopakamoggallānasutta*, M iii, 11-12,.

<sup>8</sup> According to the *Sāmaññaphalasutta*, the other seven types of magical power are as follows. (1) The meditator appears and vanishes. (2) He goes unimpeded through walls, ramparts, and mountains as if through space. (3) He dives in and out of the earth as if it were water. (4) He walks on water without sinking as if it were dry land. (5) Sitting cross-legged he flies through the air like a winged bird. (6) With his hand he touches and strokes even the sun and moon. (7) He exercises influence with his body that reaches as far as the Brahma worlds.

<sup>9</sup> Vsm. 323-328.

<sup>10</sup> T1, 86a, T2, 711a. This supernatural power is also mentioned in a similar way in an independent *sūtra* translated by An Shigao in the second century CE. This *sūtra* is a translation from the *\*Ekottarāgama*.

<sup>11</sup> D i, 79.

<sup>12</sup> The *Paṭisambhidāmagga*, 388.

<sup>13</sup> D ii, 109.

<sup>14</sup> T2, 802c.

<sup>15</sup> T30, 493a-c.

<sup>16</sup> T31, 810c.

<sup>17</sup> T17, 753b.

<sup>18</sup> T8, 473b.

<sup>19</sup> The *Fangguang Boruojing* 放光般若經, translated by Mokṣala in 291 CE, T8, 113b-c.

<sup>20</sup> The corresponding chapter in Śikṣānanda's translation of the *\*Avataṃsaka* is thirty-seven entitled 'The appearance of the Tathāgata'.

<sup>21</sup> T10, 603c. 如來至真，以無上慧，為大法王，常顯法樂，而以自娛，寂然無以，普布法界。法身陰雲，靡不周遍，因其眾生所信樂者，而示現之。(1)或為眾生，頒宣暢示，最正覺身，而興法雨，(2)現變化身，放法雲雨，(3)現建立身，而降法雨，(4)現色像身，若干品雨，(5)現功德身，而演雲雨，(6)或復示現慧身雲雨，(7)或復隨俗，示現其身。The translation is mine.

<sup>22</sup> T9, 483c. 諸佛出世，安立眾生於智慧門，入真實義，顯現不可思議如來化身，普照無量無數不可思議諸佛世界及諸法界。The translation is mine.

<sup>23</sup> T9, 602a. 如來有大人相，名曰普照淨法輪雲...出生無量如來化身。The translation is mine.

<sup>24</sup> T9, 726c.

<sup>25</sup> T9, 483a, T10, 329c.

<sup>26</sup> T9, 726c.

<sup>27</sup> T9, 752a, 763c.

<sup>28</sup> T9, 598c.

<sup>29</sup> T9, 763c.

<sup>30</sup> T24, 997c.

<sup>31</sup> T25, 698b. 菩薩得無生忍法入如幻菩薩道。能一時變化作千億萬身。周遍十方具足行一切菩薩道。處處國土中，隨眾生壽命長短而受其形。如釋迦牟尼佛，於此國土壽命百年，於莊嚴佛國壽七百阿僧祇劫。The translation is mine.

<sup>32</sup> Lamotte thinks that this *sūtra* is the *Sūtra of Buddha's Ascension to the Trayastriṃśa Heaven to Preach the Dharma for his Mother's Sake* (《佛昇忉利天為母說法經》 T17, No.815, 795b~c) translated by Dharmarakṣa in 270 CE. There is another translation of the same *sūtra* entitled the *Sūtra on the Unlimited Changes of the Supernatural Footsteps* (《佛說道神足無極變化經》 T17, No.816, 811b~812a) translated by Fa Qin in the Western Jin Dynasty 265-316 CE.

<sup>33</sup> T25, 302b-c.

<sup>34</sup> T9, 486c.

<sup>35</sup> T9, 617a-c.

<sup>36</sup> T16, 711a.

<sup>37</sup> T16, 708b-c.

<sup>38</sup> T30, 493b-c.

<sup>39</sup> This translation is adopted, with minor changes, from Paul J. Griffiths, Noriaki Hakamaya, John P. Keenan, and Paul L. Swanson (1989), 251-252.

<sup>40</sup> This translation is adopted, with minor changes, from Griffiths, Paul, Hakamaya Noriaki, John P. Keenan, and Paul L. Swanson (1989), 263.

<sup>41</sup> T31, 269a-b.

<sup>42</sup> T31, 129c. 149a.

<sup>43</sup> T31, 810c-811a.

<sup>44</sup> T31, 808c-809a.

<sup>45</sup> T26, 325c. 變化身者，一切神變圓滿為相，一切化用共所集成，示現一切自在作用，一切白法增上所引。一切如來各別化用微妙難測，居淨穢土，現種種形說種種法，成熟下位菩薩二乘及異生眾，令入大地，出離三界脫諸惡趣。

<sup>46</sup> T31, 58a. 三，變化身，謂諸如來，由成事智變現無量隨類化身，居淨穢土，為未登地諸菩薩眾、二乘、異生，稱彼機宜，現通說法，令各獲得諸利樂事。The translation is mine.

<sup>47</sup> T44, 820c. 化身應身及與真身：法報兩佛名為真身，為化眾生示現佛形名為應身，示現種種六道之形說為化身。

<sup>48</sup> T16, 362c.

## Chapter Seven

# The Attributes of the Buddha and Other Buddhas in Early and Middle Mahāyāna Sūtras<sup>1</sup>

In the previous chapters, we have already discussed the origins and development of the three bodies of the Buddha. In this chapter we are going to discuss two aspects of the concept of the Buddha. First, the attributes and qualities of the Buddha that have not yet been discussed, and second, the other Buddhas in the early and middle Mahāyāna *sūtras*. These two aspects have also contributed to the formulation of the *trikāya* theory.

### 1. The Light of the Buddha

The idea that the Buddha had bodily light emerged very early. It is mentioned in both the Pāli and the Chinese versions of the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* that the Buddha's body radiated during the night of his final passing away.<sup>2</sup> According to this *sūtra*, there were two occasions in which the Buddha's body radiated: the night when he attained full enlightenment and the night before his final *nirvāṇa*, as there was no remaining element of clinging.<sup>3</sup> However, followers of the Buddha thought that he must have emitted bodily light on many other occasions in a similar way. The *\*Mahāprajñāpāramitāsāstra* (MPPŚ) mentions that the Buddha's body emitted light on various occasions. These include his descent from the Tuṣita heaven, his birth, attaining enlightenment, the first turning of the wheel of Dharma, the defeat of the heretics, his *parinirvāṇa*, and also on many occasions when the Buddha delivered important *sūtras* such as the *\*Prajñāpāramitā* and the *\*Saddharmapuṇḍarīka*.<sup>4</sup> To this bodily light was added another light, the Buddha's light of wisdom. It is said in the MPPŚ that there are two kinds of light of the Buddha: the physical light (*rūpa-prabhā*) and the light of wisdom (*prajñā-prabhā*).<sup>5</sup> For the purpose of saving



sentient beings, the Buddha emits the physical light from his body, and for the purpose of differentiation and analysis of the general and individual characteristics of all dharmas, he sheds the light of wisdom.<sup>6</sup> The physical light can again be divided into two categories. The first is the light actually emitted from the physical body of the Buddha, such as the one-fathom halo that radiates from his body constantly without interruption. The second is the light that appears through the supernatural power of the Buddha on certain occasions, such as the preaching of important *sūtras*.<sup>7</sup> It should therefore be named as the light of the supernatural power. Thus, the light of the Buddha can be further classified into three types: (1) the physical light, (2) the light of the supernatural power and (3) the light of wisdom.<sup>8</sup>

### 1. *The Physical Light*

The physical light of the Buddha is formed by a one-fathom halo. As discussed in chapter two, there is no mention of this attribute in the *Nikāyas* and the *Āgamas*. Therein the Buddha is only described as having skin like the colour of gold as one of the thirty-two marks. It is in the period of the early Indian Buddhist schools that the attribute of the one-fathom long rays became one of the qualities of the Buddha. There was a debate as to whether it belonged to the thirty-two marks of a great man. As a result, some of the biographical *sūtras* of the Buddha such as the *Atītapratyutpanna-hetuphala* included it in the list of the thirty-two marks while many others did not. Nevertheless, the one-fathom halo was included in the thirty-two marks in all the relevant Mahāyāna *sūtras* and it became a standard expression.

As discussed in chapter two, it is perhaps the Sarvāstivādins who first conceived that the Buddha had a one-fathom halo radiating from the four sides of his body. This idea most probably originated from the mark of the golden coloured-skin of the Buddha described in early Buddhism. According to the *Vibhāṣā*, the physical light endowed with a one-fathom halo constantly radiates from the Buddha's body day and night.<sup>9</sup> Thus, it is deemed 'normal' or 'constant light'. The MPPŚ further explains

that this normal bodily light is different in every Buddha. For instance, Maitreya Buddha has the normal light of ten *li* (five kilometres) emitting from his body.<sup>10</sup> Amitābha Buddha, on the other hand, has infinite bodily light, and according to the \**Amitāyurbuddhadhyānasūtra*, it is for this reason that he is so named.<sup>11</sup> Śākyamuni, in fact, had immeasurable bodily light, but he displayed one-fathom long rays in accordance with the disposition of people in the Sahā world as stated in the *Vibhāṣā*.<sup>12</sup> The \**Prajñāpāramitāsūtras* incorporated the attribute of the Buddha's bodily light into the bodhisattva ideal and made it one of the ten accomplishments to be fulfilled by bodhisattvas in the ninth stage.<sup>13</sup> Thus, it has become a standard expression in Mahāyāna Buddhism that the Buddha possessed the physical "light measuring one-fathom radiating from all sides of his body". This is depicted in most images of the Buddha by a circle around his head.

## 2. *The Light of Supernatural Power*

The light of supernatural power of the Buddha can be divided into two kinds: (1) the light that emits from bodily marks such as the white hair and (2) the light that emits from all over his body. First, the mark of the white hair is a special attribute of the Buddha and the Mahāyānists pay special attention to it. It is said that the white hair always emits immense beams of light whenever the Buddha is about to deliver an important *sūtra*. The chapter on meditation on the physical marks in the \**Buddhadhyānasamādhisāgarasūtra* mentions that the Tathāgata has uncountable marks of greatness, and in each mark there are eighty four thousand minor marks, all of them emitting beams of light. None of them, however, can compare with the merit of the mark of white hair (*ūrṇā-kośa*).<sup>14</sup> The *sūtra* states that through the mark of white hair, the Buddha emanated immense beams of light at different stages in his life, both as a prince and as a Buddha. In particular, when the Buddha battled with Māra, the white hair emitted beams of light in the ten directions as bright as billions of suns. Māra and his retinues saw billions of wondrously produced Śākyamunis, and each had

a white hair as long as five *zhangs* (about sixteen meters) on his forehead. In the white hair of every Buddha there are immeasurable beams of light and in each beam of light there are numerous manifested Buddhas that also have white hair.<sup>15</sup> It was this magical light of the white hair that subdued Marā, the evil one.

In his *\*Daśabhūmikasūtraśāstra* Vasubandhu states that the light of the white hair has eight kinds of *karma* and two kinds of bodies.<sup>16</sup> They are: (1) The *karma* of enlightenment, where bodhisattvas feel the aid bestowed by the Buddha when the light illuminates their bodies.<sup>17</sup> (2) The *karma* of cause as the *asaṃkhyeya* beams of light have immeasurable rays of light as retinue. (3) The *karma* of expansion and diminution, which illuminates the *asaṃkhyeya* worlds when expanding and reduces to normal light when diminishing. (4) The *karma* of cessation, which brings various kinds of anguish to cessation in all suffering realms. (5) The *karma* of subjugation, which outshines the light of Māra's palaces and which deprives him of his power to terrify and disturb sentient beings who are going to be liberated. (6) The *karma* of veneration, which can manifest the inconceivable power of the Buddha. (7) The *karma* of manifestation, which illuminates the worlds of the ten directions and bestows the Tathāgata's power upon the teachers (of the Dharma) as well as bodhisattvas. (8) The *karma* of invitation, which can produce voices and speak verses. For instance, on the web platform of the great light cloud, a voice speaks verses inviting the Buddha to ascend his seat. The two bodies of the light of the white hair are: the body that can travel like comets to all the Buddha Lands, and the body that abides in empty space like the sun. The *sūtra* says that the light constructs a web platform of great light in the air, and the body abides there illuminating all worlds at all times. Living beings in different worlds can see each other and listen to the teaching of the Buddha as in one assembly.

In the *\*Avataṃsaka* there are descriptions of the light emitting from the marks of the Buddha. These are found in two chapters dedicated to the marks of the Buddha, one on the major and the other on the minor marks.<sup>18</sup> These marks do not correspond

to the traditional thirty-two major and eighty minor marks, and they are named the Ocean of Marks of the Tathāgata. The *sūtra* mentions ninety-seven major marks and each mark, which is decorated with various jewels, emits immeasurable beams of light illuminating all the worlds of the ten directions. The *\*Avataṃsaka* version translated by Śikṣānanda mentions at the end of chapter thirty-four that “Vairocana Buddha has as many such marks of greatness as atoms in ten Flower Treasury oceans of worlds, each limb adorned with sublime marks of myriad jewels.”<sup>19</sup> Here Vairocana Buddha is none other than Śākyamuni, because it is said in the following chapter that Vairocana Buddha descended from Tuṣita Heaven and was born in the human world, in the house of King Śuddhodana.<sup>20</sup> Thus, Śākyamuni Buddha was endowed with countless marks of greatness from which emanated immeasurable beams of light.

The chapter on the Merit of Light of the Buddha’s Minor Marks in the *\*Avataṃsaka* mentions that the Buddha has a minor mark named ‘king of ocean’ from which a light named ‘pure effulgence’ emits beams of light together with seven million *asaṃkhyeya* beams as retinue.<sup>21</sup> The *sūtra* then describes that the wheel-mark on the sole of the Buddha has a light named ‘king of universal light’ which, together with the minor mark of ‘the king of ocean’, emanates forty kinds of light. Amongst them a light called ‘pure virtue’ illuminates as many worlds as the atoms in six billion Buddha Lands, causing all sentient beings to develop and mature according to their various actions and inclinations.

The second kind is the light of supernatural power of the Buddha that is only emitted when the Buddha delivers a special *sūtra* or on a special occasion. The *\*Saddharmapuṇḍarīka*, one of the earliest Mahāyāna *sūtras*, mentions that the Buddha emanated immense rays of light from the white hair between his eyebrows before he preached the *sūtra*.<sup>22</sup> The light illuminated the eighteen thousand Buddha Lands in the eastern direction. There was no place that the light did not penetrate, reaching downward as far as the Avīci hell and upward to Akaniṣṭha heaven. People

from the *Sahā* world could see the Buddhas, the sentient beings and the bodhisattvas in those lands could also hear the expounding of the *sūtra*.<sup>23</sup>

The *\*Prajñāpāramitāsūtras* mention five kinds of light miraculously emanating from the whole body of the Buddha before he taught the *sūtra*, and living beings that encounter this light are held to reach liberation. This light, according to the *sūtra*, is a result of the concentration named King of Concentration (*samādhirājasamādhi*), which contains all *samādhis*. First, the Buddha emanated immense rays of light from the wheel marks on his feet. Second, the Buddha emanates immeasurable rays of light from all over his body from feet to head. Third, the Buddha emanated immeasurable rays of light from all pores of his bodily hairs. Fourth, the Buddha emitted the natural or ordinary rays of light, which extended for a fathom from all four sides of his body. Fifth, he emanated immeasurable rays of light from his tongue when he stretches it out. Each of the rays from his tongue manifested a treasury of lotuses with a thousand petals emitting golden light, and on each lotus a sitting Buddha preached the six *pāramitās*. From all these five kinds of rays, immeasurable rays of light are released. These rays illuminate all Buddha Lands of the great *trisāhasra* universe in the ten directions. Living beings that encounter such rays of light were to attain supreme and perfect enlightenment (*amuttara-saṃyak-saṃbodhi*). Thus, Śākyamuni Buddha showed the eternal body to all beings in the great *trisāhasra* universe by magical power.<sup>24</sup>

The MPPŚ mentions what is probably the most spectacular mythical power of the Buddha. It is said that Ānanda once had a doubt that Śākyamuni would pass away without completing his task (Buddha work) of saving sentient beings. In order to disperse his doubt, Śākyamuni entered into the *samādhi* known as 'the Sun Rising' and emitted from all pores of his bodily hairs immense beams of light illuminating as many worlds as the sand in the Ganges River in the ten directions. In each beam, there appeared a seven-jewelled lotus with a thousand petals in which there was a sitting Buddha. All these Buddhas appeared in as many worlds as the sand in the Ganges

River to save sentient beings.<sup>25</sup> Thus, the light here symbolizes the soteriological power of the Buddha. The *Avataṃsaka* states that all Buddhas have the embellishment of supreme and immeasurable beams of light, and each beam has numerous webs of light as retinue, which illuminate the Buddha lands of the ten directions and eliminate the darkness in all the worlds.<sup>26</sup>

According to the *\*Daśabhūmikasūtraśāstra*, the light of the Buddha has three kinds of *karma*: to benefit those who encounter it, to awaken faith, and to subjugate pride.<sup>27</sup> However, Fazang explains that there are four kinds of meaning concerning the light: (1) that of manifesting the wonderful and majestic Buddha body and Dharma, (2) for the awakening of faith, (3) for aiding the suffering, and (4) for convening assemblies from afar.<sup>28</sup>

This analysis suggests that the Mahāyānists greatly developed the attribute of light and considered it the soteriological power of the Buddha through which sentient beings are liberated. Early Buddhism advocated that one could attain liberation only through one's energetic strife and that the Buddha was only considered as a teacher or a guide. But in Mahāyāna Buddhism, one could attain liberation through the power of the Buddha as manifested in the light he emits. This is a major change in the Buddhist attitude towards liberation by reliance on oneself to the reliance on Buddhas and bodhisattvas such as Amitābha and Avalokiteśvara. The soteriological power of the Buddha is strengthened and expanded through the light of supernatural power.

### 3. *The Light of Wisdom*

The light of wisdom corresponds to the light of *dharmakāya* because the *dharmakāya* has wisdom as its essence, as discussed in chapter four. It is stated in the MPPŚ: "The infinite *dharmatākāya* pervades the space of the ten directions, its form is majestic and wonderful, its light and voice are immeasurable."<sup>29</sup> Again, "This infinite *dharmatākāya* or *Buddhakāya* has limitless light and its voice of expounding the Dharma pervades the Buddha lands of the ten directions."<sup>30</sup> The

\**Samdhanirmocanasūtra* also affirms the same by saying that through the accumulation of merit by practising skilful means (*upāyakaushalya*) and wisdom (*prajñā*), one obtains the *dharmakāya*. From the latter, light of great wisdom emanates and various *nirmāṇakāyas* are manifested.<sup>31</sup> According to the *Avataṃsaka*, all Buddhas have supreme adornments of light from which emanate countless beams of light, and each beam of light is accompanied by webs of light as retinue. These beams of light illuminate all Buddha lands of the ten directions, destroy the darkness in all worlds and reveal innumerable Buddhas who perform Buddha activities.<sup>32</sup> This is because all Buddhas have one and the same *dharmakāya*, and from the wheel of the great wisdom emanate various kinds of light of wisdom.<sup>33</sup> Although the *dharmakāya* always emanates light and preaches the Dharma, sentient beings that have defilements do not see it or hear it. It is just like the blind not being able to see the sun. Only those who have pure minds are able to see it.<sup>34</sup> The Yogācārins further explain that the light of wisdom refers to the light of 'the non-discrimination wisdom' and 'the subsequently obtained wisdom', which are inherent in the *dharmakāya*.<sup>35</sup>

The light of the *dharmakāya* can be interpreted in two ways. First, the *dharmakāya* emanates immense light because it is intrinsically pure and endowed with immeasurable merit. Second, the light of the *dharmakāya* is the light of the Dharma of the Buddha, which destroys the darkness of ignorance and defilements of sentient beings. Let us discuss the first aspect. As discussed in chapter four, the *dharmakāya* is identified with suchness (*tathatā*), which is pure from beginningless time. The *Shimoheyelun* (Elucidation of Mahāyāna) attributed to Nāgārjuna explains that from time immemorial, suchness (*tathatā*) is by nature endowed with all excellent qualities such as the light of great wisdom illuminating the entire Dharma realm.<sup>36</sup> Suchness (*tathatā*) is called the *tathāgatagarbha* when latent and the *dharmakāya* when manifested. The \**Sarvadharmaratnottara(-artha)-saṅgīti-śāstra* attributed to Bodhisattva Kuśalaśānti(?) also states that the *tathatā* has no mark and is free from cognitive objects, its self-nature is pure, and it possesses great light.<sup>37</sup> The

\**Avataṃsaka* further states that all Buddhas have *dharmakāya*, which is pure and eternal, equally illuminating all.<sup>38</sup> Thus the *dharmakāya* emanates light because its nature is pure.

The light of the Dharma of the Buddha has been discussed in many *sūtras*. The *Daśabhūmikasūtra* states: “One body of the Tathāgata (the *dharmakāya*) brings down the rain (of Dharma) in the realm of Dharmatā, it preaches the (Dharma) womb of all times which contains the supreme teaching of Dharma. This is the light of Dharma.”<sup>39</sup> The \**Avataṃsaka* states: “The pure and wonderful *dharmakāya* of the bodhisattvas is produced from the true Dharma of all Buddhas. The bright and pure Dharma light benefits all sentient beings through the preaching of infinite Dharma that destroys their sufferings and worries.”<sup>40</sup> Then in chapter eight, the \**Avataṃsaka* says that bodhisattvas preach the four noble truths through various means and thus they emit inconceivable beams of light through which they save sentient beings.<sup>41</sup> The text mentions forty-four kinds of light through the encounter of which sentient beings are enlightened. These beams of light are given various names and each aims at a particular group of sentient beings. For instance, the light of non-greediness enlightens those who are greedy, the light of coolness enlightens those who violate the discipline, the light of tranquillity enlightens those whose minds are confused, and the light of wisdom adornment enlightens those who are ignorant. This, in Mahāyāna Buddhism, is called the Dharma Door, which means the method of practice. There are countless Dharma Doors because there are numerous kinds of sentient beings. Therefore, the Buddha has immeasurable beams of light of Dharma in accordance with the inclinations of sentient beings.

The light of Dharma is a subject of discussion in both the \**Yogācārabhūmiśāstra* and the *Mahāyānasamgraha* (MS). The \**Yogācārabhūmiśāstra* mentions three kinds of light: the light countering darkness, the light of Dharma and the bodily light.<sup>42</sup> The light countering darkness is again categorised into three: (a) the light of the moon and stars in the night, (b) the light of the sun at daytime, and (c) the light of bright objects



such as fire and jewels. They counter three kinds of darkness: darkness of the night, darkness brought about by clouds and the darkness caused by houses and caves respectively. The bodily light is the light radiating naturally from the bodies of sentient beings. The light of Dharma is the observation of phenomena through feeling, thought and contact, or by one's practice of reciting the names of Buddhas. It counters three kinds of darkness: ignorance, doubt and sluggishness (*styāna*) because it can reveal the nature of all *dharmas*. In other words, the light of Dharma is the knowledge obtained through observation as well as energetic practice.

The MS states that a bodhisattva obtains, as one of the five results of practice, right and comprehensive knowledge of the light of the great Dharma, which is infinite and indiscriminate.<sup>43</sup> The Chinese master Chengguan (澄觀 738-839), after having carefully examined both the MS and its commentaries, states that the light of Dharma has four meanings.<sup>44</sup> First, according to Vasubandhu's commentary, the light of Dharma is the wisdom of Dharma as well as the infinite *dharmas* to be realized by wisdom. Vasubandhu explains that the light of Dharma is the comprehensive knowledge of the infinite and undifferentiated *dharmas* of the ten directions, such as skilful study and recitation of the written language.<sup>45</sup> Second, according to Asvabhāva's commentary of the MS, the light of Dharma is wisdom, as he explains that it has the function of illumination.<sup>46</sup> Third, according to Paramārtha's translation of Vasubandhu's commentary of the MS, the light of Dharma has two kinds of wisdom: the experiential wisdom and the undefiled, non-discriminating wisdom.<sup>47</sup> Fourth, according to the *Kośa*, the light of Dharma is the light opposing ignorance. These four meanings of the light of Dharma still focus on wisdom that is obtained through both learning and practice.

## 2. The Retinue of the Buddha

There are two kinds of retinue of the Buddha according to the MPPŚ. They are: (1) the family or internal retinue such as Yaśodharā and Ānanda, who formed the

retinue of Śākyamuni Buddha, and (2) the retinue of great bodhisattvas who have one more birth to *bodhi*, such as Maitreya and Mañjuśrī. The first retinue belongs to the *rūpakāya* and the second belongs to the *dharmatākāya*.<sup>48</sup> The MPPŚ discusses only the two Buddha bodies, but if we apply these two kinds of retinue to the three-body theory, the worldly retinue would belong to the *nirmāṇakāya* and the great bodhisattva retinue would belong to the *saṃbhogakāya*. This is because the *saṃbhogakāya* enjoys the Dharma only with great bodhisattvas and not with others, according to the *Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkāra*.<sup>49</sup> In other words, the *saṃbhogakāya* would have only the great bodhisattvas as retinue, while the *dharmakāya* in the three body theory is the support and basis of the other two bodies.

The idea of the bodhisattva retinue emerged very early. For instance, the *\*Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā* mentions twelve accomplishments (*samanvāgama*) to be fulfilled by a bodhisattva in the ninth stage (*bhūmi*), one of which is the accomplishment of the bodhisattva retinue.<sup>50</sup> The twelve accomplishments are modelled obviously after the life of Śākyamuni, an issue that has already been discussed by Hisao Inagaki.<sup>51</sup> In other words, Śākyamuni before his enlightenment was considered by the compilers to be a bodhisattva of the ninth stage because a bodhisattva of the tenth *bhūmi* is already a Buddha according to the *\*Prajñāpāramitāsūtras*.<sup>52</sup> The *\*Saddharmapuṇḍarīkasūtra* also states that bodhisattvas that appeared from the earth are all great retinues of the Buddha.<sup>53</sup> The *\*Prajñāpāramitāsūtra* defines 'bodhisattva retinue' by stating that the Buddha possesses only bodhisattvas as his retinue.<sup>54</sup> It is also said in the MPPŚ that there are Buddhas who have only bodhisattvas as their retinue, Buddhas who have only *śrāvakas* as their retinue and Buddhas who have both bodhisattvas and *śrāvakas* as their retinue.<sup>55</sup> It is clear that the Buddhas who have only bodhisattvas as their retinue are not the *rūpakāya* or the *nirmāṇakāya* but the *saṃbhogakāya* according to the *trikāya* theory.

The *\*Daśabhūmikasūtra* narrates in detail that a bodhisattva can manifest

different numbers of bodhisattva retinues in each of the ten stages (*bhūmi*). These vary from a hundred on the first stage to as many as the atoms in the *asaṃkhyeya* great *trisāhasra* universe on the ninth stage.<sup>56</sup> In the *Avataṃsaka*, such bodhisattva retinues are mentioned frequently. Examples include the chapters on Vairocana Buddha and the Awakening Light of the Tathāgata which mention immeasurable great bodhisattva retinues that visited the Buddha from the ten directions. In chapter nine, it is said that the Buddha traveled to the top of Mount Sumeru. In the following chapter, many bodhisattvas came and praised the Buddha in verse. The text states, “The pure bodhisattva assembly, the great retinue of all Buddhas, who come from the ten directions, sit cross-legged.”<sup>57</sup> By the time the *Avataṃsaka* appeared as a collective and accumulated *sūtra* compilation, the theory that Buddhas possessed numerous great bodhisattvas as their retinue was already accepted.

This is demonstrated in chapter five of the *Avataṃsaka*, pertaining to the awakening light of the Buddha. The text describes that the Buddha, from beneath the wheel-mark of his feet, emitted a hundred billion light beams, illuminating the entire great *trisāhasra* universe.<sup>58</sup> The Buddha was seen as sitting on a lotus lion throne surrounded by as many bodhisattva retinues as the atoms in the ten Buddha lands. By magic power, from each of the ten directions respectively, one great bodhisattva visited the Buddha with as many bodhisattvas as atoms of the ten Buddha lands. The light beams passed through this universe and illuminated ten Buddha lands in the eastern direction, where people in all these Buddha lands perceived the Buddha in the same majestic form. The same is said regarding the other nine directions. Similarly, the light beams of the Buddha traversed another eight times while extending to a hundred thousand billion Buddha lands in each of the ten directions. And just as the first time in each extension, from each of the ten directions, one great bodhisattva was seen visiting the Buddha with as many bodhisattvas as atoms in the ten Buddha lands. In this description there is no mention of *śrāvakas* or *pratyekabuddhas*, thus it is a huge assembly of the great bodhisattvas. This Buddha is none other than the

*saṃbhogakāya* as defined by the *Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkāra*.

These Buddhas, together with their great bodhisattva retinues are not seen by sentient beings. Then what are these Buddhas? The ancient Chinese masters such as Fazang (法藏 643-712) found it very difficult to categorize the main interlocutory Buddha of the *Avataṃsaka* into any one of the three bodies. Some argued that it was the *nirmāṇakāya* as the Buddha attained enlightenment under the *bodhi* tree. Others debated that it was the *saṃbhogakāya* as Vairocana was a form of Śākyamuni abiding in the Pure Land of the lotus womb (*padma-garbha-loka-dhātu*).<sup>59</sup> These Chinese masters had the three Buddha bodies in their minds when they examined this *sūtra*. However, this *sūtra* came into existence before the *trikāya* theory was formulated. As a result the compilers of the *Avataṃsaka* lacked notions of the three Buddha bodies. They described the glorious and luminous Buddhas with reference to other early Mahāyāna *sūtras*. Therefore, the only conclusion we can draw is that the attributes of the *saṃbhogakāya* were already prevalent in the *\*Avataṃsaka*.

In fact, it is only in the *\*Avataṃsaka* that the soteriological aspect of the Buddha has been developed to the extent that all the qualities and attributes of the *saṃbhogakāya*, the mythological or almighty Buddha, are presented. The *Avataṃsaka* presents itself in such a way that it is a teaching aimed at the assembly of great bodhisattvas. The Chinese master Fazang, who established the Huayan School based on the *\*Avataṃsaka* even considered that the Buddha had taught the *Avataṃsaka* to the great bodhisattvas in the second week after his enlightenment.<sup>60</sup>

### 3. The Twenty-One Qualities of the Buddha

The *Dushipinjing* is probably the first text to mention the qualities of the Buddha in twenty-one sentences. As discussed in chapter four, the *Dushipinjing*, which was translated by Dharmarakṣa in the third century, corresponds to the chapter on the Detachment from the World of the *\*Avataṃsaka*.<sup>61</sup> In fact, these twenty-one sentences are found in the two translations of the *\*Avataṃsaka* by Buddhahadra and

Śikṣānanda.<sup>62</sup> They also appear at the beginning of the *\*Buddhabhūmisūtra*.<sup>63</sup> However, according to Chengguan, the commentator of the *\*Avataṃsaka*, it was Asaṅga who named them as the twenty-one qualities of the Buddha and discussed them in his *Mahāyānasamgraha*.<sup>64</sup> Henceforth the phrase was used by the commentators of the *Mahāyānasamgraha*, Vasubandhu and Asvabhāva as well as Bandhuprabha, the commentator of the *\*Buddhabhūmisūtra*.<sup>65</sup>

The twenty-one qualities were considered by Asaṅga to consist of the purest wisdom of the Buddha. The first sentence, which says that (1) ‘the Bhagavat has attained the supreme and pure enlightenment’ is a key sentence, and the other twenty qualities are explanations of this pure enlightenment. Bandhuprabha explains that the Buddha is rightly and fully enlightened on all conditioned and unconditioned *dharmas*. In other words, the Buddha knows all things both worldly and transcendental. (2) The Buddha arises in a non-dual course, which is explained by Asaṅga as the quality of arising without any obstacle whatsoever to knowing. Asvabhāva further explains that this is the non-obstruction wisdom which knows all things concerning their categories and differences without obstacles and doubt. However, Bandhuprabha is of the opinion that the Buddha abides neither in *saṃsāra* nor in *nirvāṇa*, which are considered obstacles. Sentient beings abide in *saṃsāra* and therefore they have defilement (*kleśas*), while *śrāvakas* and *pratyekabuddhas* abide in *nirvāṇa* and do not perform actions to benefit others. (3) The Buddha enters into the state of no characteristics. Asaṅga explains that it is the quality of causing entrance into pure suchness without the duality of the conditioned and the unconditioned. Asvabhāva says that the Buddha not only enters suchness himself but also causes others to enter it. (4) The Buddha abides in the abode of Buddhas. Asaṅga explains that the quality of the Buddha’s abode is such that the Tathāgata’s activity is effortless and uninterrupted. Bandhuprabha says that the Buddha abides in compassion and observes the world day and night to save sentient beings. (5) The Buddha attains the state of nature that is equal in all Buddhas. Asaṅga explains that this is the quality of the absence of

differentiation in support, intention, and activity in the *dharmakāya*. Chengguan further explains that the support is suchness, or pure wisdom, while the intention is the mind of sharing happiness. The activity means that all Buddhas benefit others through the *saṃbhogakāya* and the *nirmāṇakāya*.<sup>66</sup> (6) The Buddha has arrived at the state of non-obstruction. Asaṅga explains that this is the quality of opposing all obstacles to practice. The commentators explain that the Buddha has obtained the wisdom of liberation by eliminating both *kleśas* and the obstacles to knowledge. (7) The Buddha has attained irrefutable Dharma. Asaṅga explains that this is the quality of suppressing all heretical doctrines. (8) The Buddha performs deeds without obstacles. Asaṅga explains that this is the quality of arising in the world without being defiled by the worldly states. On the contrary, Bandhuprabha explains that this is the quality of suppressing Māras, for obstacles such as form (*rūpa*) cannot disturb the Buddha. (9) The Dharma established by the Buddha is inconceivable. Asaṅga explains that this is the quality of true doctrine validly established. (10) The Buddhas are equal in all three times. Paramārtha's translation of the *Mahāyānasamgraha* explains this as the quality of responding to the questions of others through the four skilful answers. Xuanzang's translation explains it as the quality of prophesy (*vyākaraṇa*).<sup>67</sup> Bandhuprabha also explains that this is the quality of prophesying past as well as future without any obstacle.<sup>68</sup> (11) The Buddha can manifest different bodies in all the worlds. Asaṅga explains that this is the quality of manifesting the *saṃbhogakāya* and the *nirmāṇakāya* in all worldly realms. (12) The Buddha has unhindered wisdom in all things. Asaṅga explains that this is the quality of resolving the doubts of others. (13) All practices of the Buddha are for great enlightenment. Asaṅga explains that this is the quality of introducing others to various practices that will lead to great enlightenment. (14) The Buddha's wisdom is found in all things. Asaṅga explains that this is the quality of understanding things that arise in the future. (15) The Buddha makes various manifestations without any differentiation. Asaṅga explains that this is the quality of manifestation in accordance with the aspirations of

sentient beings. But Bandhuprabha asserts that it is the quality that pertains to the pure body that will not give rise to defilement. (16) The Buddha has the wisdom of non-discrimination that all bodhisattvas seek. This is the quality of taming sentient beings and the support of countless bodhisattvas. (17) The Buddha has attained the perfection of non-dual abode. Asaṅga explains that this is the quality of the fullness of perfection of the *dharmakāya*. Bandhuprabha explains that the abode itself is the *dharmakāya* because suchness is non-dual. (18) The Buddha has obtained the wonderful liberation wisdom which is infinite. Asaṅga explains that this is the quality of manifesting various pure Buddha lands in accordance with the aspirations of sentient beings. Bandhuprabha explains that this is the merit of the *saṃbhogakāya* which is different in every Buddha. But Chengguan explains that the pure lands manifested by the Buddha are of two kinds: the pure land of the *nirmāṇakāya* and the pure land of the *saṃbhogakāya*. (19) The Buddha has attained the Buddha stage (*bhūmi*) of impartiality without extremes. Asaṅga explains that this is the quality of infinity and undifferentiation of the three Buddha bodies in all worlds. Bandhuprabha says that this is the quality of suchness, because it is free from all characteristics and is therefore impartial to all Buddhas. (20) The Buddha attains the ultimacy of the reality realm (*dharmadhātu*). Asaṅga explains that this is the quality of engendering benefit and happiness for all sentient beings to the limit of the birth-death cycle. Bandhuprabha says that this is the quality of the Buddha's attainment which exhausts the entire cosmos and which is the fruit of the practice of the Dharma. (21) The attainment of the Buddha extends to the limit of empty space and the infinite future. Asaṅga explains that this is the quality of inexhaustibility. Bandhuprabha explains on the contrary that the Buddha performs beneficial deeds both for himself and for others without exhaustion.<sup>69</sup>

These twenty-one qualities are a summary of the attributes of the Buddha that were developed in the early and middle Mahāyāna *sūtras* before the *\*Avataṃsaka* was finalized. Bandhuprabha claims that these are the twenty-one supreme and special

qualities of the Buddha which are obtained through the attainment of pure *bodhi*, Buddhahood.<sup>70</sup> In his commentary on the *Avataṃsaka*, Fazang further explains that these are the twenty-one qualities of the *saṃbhogakāya*, the fruit of the Buddha.<sup>71</sup> This would appear to be accurate, as the *\*Avataṃsaka* goes on to describe the bodhisattvas who have one more birth before *bodhi* and who have come from the ten directions of the world to attend the assembly. Thus it would follow that the Buddha mentioned in the chapter on Detachment from the World in the *Avataṃsaka* pertains to the *saṃbhogakāya* aspect.

#### 4. The Ten Buddhas and Ten Buddha Bodies

The *\*Avataṃsaka* is perhaps the first text to mention the ten Buddhas in the chapter on the Detachment from the World and the ten Buddha bodies in the chapter on the Ten Stages (*bhūmi*).<sup>72</sup> These have become subjects of discussion in almost all the commentaries on the *sūtra* written by Chinese masters. As discussed in chapter four, the *\*Avataṃsaka* was first translated into Chinese by Buddhahadra in 398-421 CE. The chapter on Detachment from the World as an independent *sūtra* entitled the *Dushipinjing* (the *sūtra* on the crossing over of the world) was translated even earlier by Dharmarakṣa in 265-316 CE. The *Dushipinjing* already mentions that bodhisattvas have ten ways of seeing Buddhas, but it does not mention the names of the ten Buddhas in the chapter on the Detachment from the World in the *\*Avataṃsaka*.<sup>73</sup> Asaṅga, the author of the *Mahāyānasamgraha*, must have known the *\*Avataṃsaka*, the ten Buddhas and the ten Buddha bodies mentioned therein, and these probably served as supporting basis for him to formulate the three body theory.

##### 1. The Ten Buddhas

The first of the ten Buddhas mentioned in the *\*Avataṃsaka* is the Buddha of Attainment of Full Enlightenment (*Samyak-saṃbuddha*), or the Buddha of Non-attachment, peacefully abiding in the world after the attainment of



Buddhahood.<sup>74</sup> Fazang explains that it is named the Buddha of Non-attachment because the Buddha is neither attached to *nirvāṇa* nor to the world.<sup>75</sup> Non-attachment means that the Buddha manifests himself in the world through attaining enlightenment and passing away into *nirvāṇa*. This is the general statement while the other nine are further explanations.<sup>76</sup>

The second is the Buddha of Vow (*Prāṇidhāna Buddha*). Fazang explains that as the Buddha has no more obstacles and the great vow has been accomplished, the vow is essentially the same as the Buddha. It also means that all merits are accrued under the vow of the Buddha so that the Buddha can fulfil all the wishes of sentient beings. Thus, it is named the Buddha of Vow.

The third is the Buddha of the Reward of Action (*Karmavipāka Buddha*) which can cause deep faith to arise in others. Fazang explains that all meritorious *dharma*s correspond to the effects of *karma* of sentient beings. This certainty of reward causes faith in others.

The fourth is the Buddha of Preservation of the True Teaching (*Nirmāṇakāya-Buddha*) in accordance with the world. Fazang explains that all merits support understanding and practices. Chengguan explains that it is the relics (*śarīra*) of the Buddha as well as his perfect voice, which travels through the past, the present and the future, that preserve the true teaching of the Buddha in accordance with the dispositions of sentient beings.<sup>77</sup>

The fifth is the Buddha of Nirvāṇa (*Nirvāṇa Buddha*) which forever abides over on the other shore. Fazang explains that a manifestation of the Buddha in the world serves to demonstrate the act of passing into *nirvāṇa*.

The sixth is the Buddha of the Cosmos (*Dharmadhātu Buddha*) that pervades everywhere. Chengguan explains that the *Dharmakāya* pervades the entire cosmos (*dharmadhātu*) which itself is the body of the Buddha.

The seventh is the Buddha of Mind (*Manas Buddha*) which abides peacefully. Both Fazang and Chengguan explain that the mind is the Buddha. Chengguan adds

that it is in a perfect state of peace that is purely consciousness.

The eighth is the Buddha of Concentration (*Samādhi Buddha*), which is infinite and without attachment. Fazang explains that the Buddha is always in *samādhi* and is attached to nothing.

The ninth is the Buddha of Fundamental Nature (*Tathatā Buddha*), which does not change. Fazang explains that the true nature of all *dharma*s is thus absolute, and it is by the realization of this nature that one becomes enlightened.

The tenth is the Buddha of Wish Fulfillment or the Buddha Adapting to Capacities which serves all. Fazang explains that the Buddha can manifest himself in accordance with the capacity of sentient beings under specific instances to fulfil their wishes effortlessly. All those to be liberated are under the power of the Buddha.

Fazang further explains that the ten Buddhas can also be classified into five pairs. The first two are a pair since the first Buddha is effectual and the second is the causal, for one becomes a Buddha by a great vow. The third and the fourth are a pair in that the third is the direct reward and the fourth is the dependent reward. The fifth and the sixth are a pair in that the fifth is the eternal *nirvāṇa* and the sixth is the infinite *dharmadhātu*. The seventh and eighth are a pair in that the seventh is the manifestation of the mind and the eighth is concentration without attachment. The ninth and the tenth are a pair in that the ninth is the true nature, which does not change, and the tenth is the function that spreads all over the cosmos. These ten Buddhas are in fact the merits of one Buddha, because the text states that all the Buddha bodies are included in the *dharmakāya*, which has one mind and one wisdom.<sup>78</sup>

## 2. The Ten Buddha Bodies

The *\*Avataṃsaka* also mentions two categories of ten Buddha bodies, which a bodhisattva in the eighth stage (*bhūmi*) comprehends. The first ten bodies are: (1) the body of sentient beings, (2) the body of lands, (3) the body of the reward of action, (4) the body of *śrāvakas*, (5) the body of *pratyekabuddhas*, (6) the body of bodhisattvas,

(7) the body of tathāgatas, (8) the body of wisdom, (9) the *dharmakāya* and (10) the body of empty space. The body of land is the physical world. The first, the third and the sixth pertain to the world of sentient beings. The rest pertain to the world of the enlightened.

The body of a Tathāgata itself contains ten bodies: (1) the body of enlightenment, the manifestation of a buddha-body attaining enlightenment, (2) the body of the vow, aspiring to be born in Tuṣita Heaven, (3) the body of transformation, (4) the body of preservation of the true teaching being, this being the relics of the Buddha, (5) the body adorned with excellent physical characteristics due to great merit, (6) the body of power with all the rays of light to subdue sentient beings, (7) the body manifested at will according to the occasions, (8) the body of merit and virtue, (9) the body of wisdom, and (10) the *dharmakāya*, the quintessential buddha-body.<sup>79</sup>

Zhiyan (智儼 602-668), the second patriarch of Huayan School, named the first group as the ten Buddhas of the realm of understanding. Bodhisattvas, with their pure and true wisdom of awakening, perceive that the Dharma realm is the Buddha with ten aspects (bodies). He similarly named the second group as the ten Buddhas of the realm of practice, because bodhisattvas have achieved the fruit of the Buddha when they have completed their practice.<sup>80</sup> A bodhisattva, according to the *\*Avataṃsaka*, obtains ten kinds of Buddha qualities by practising the ten perfections (*pāramitā*).<sup>81</sup> Chengguan says that these qualities are the ten Buddha bodies.<sup>82</sup> (1) A bodhisattva obtains the wonderful marks of the Buddha through the practice of generosity (*dāna*). This is the Buddha body endowed with excellent physical marks. (2) A bodhisattva obtains the pure Buddha body through the practice of discipline (*śīla*). This is the mind body. (3) A bodhisattva obtains the inconceivable body of the Buddha through the practice of patience (*kṣānti*). This is the body of enlightenment. (4) A bodhisattva obtains the invincible body of the Tathāgata through the practice of energetic striving (*vīrya*). This is the body of preservation of the true teaching. (5) A bodhisattva obtains the pure and incomparable body of the Buddha through the practice of meditation

(*dhyāna*). This is the body of merit and virtues. (6) A bodhisattva obtains the pure body of Dharma of the Tathāgata through the practice of *prajñā*. This is the *dharmakāya*. (7) A bodhisattva obtains the pure physical body of the World Honoured One through the practice of skilful means (*upāya*). This is the body of transformation. (8) A bodhisattva lives for a *kalpa* for the benefit of sentient beings through the practice of vows (*praṇidhāna*). This is the body of the vow. (9) A bodhisattva obtains the pure body that travels to all Buddha lands through the practice of power (*śala*). This is the body of power. (10) A bodhisattva obtains the pure body which makes sentient beings happy through the practice of knowledge (*jñāna*). This is the body of wisdom.

The ten Buddha bodies, according to Chengguan, are the same as the ten Buddhas and they are the ten virtues of one Buddha body, the *dharmakāya* which pervades the entire cosmos.<sup>83</sup> Therefore, the ten Buddha bodies are perfectly interfused without any obstacle. In his commentary on the \**Avataṃsaka*, Chengguan further explains that the Buddha body is both principle and practice, one and many, support and substance, preacher and Dharma, beings and non-beings, cause and effect, profound and infinite, three bodies and ten bodies, because it has the same cloud of the *dharmakāya*.<sup>84</sup>

Kuiji, the eminent disciple of Xuanzang, explains that the *nirmāṇakāya* is composed of the first five of the ten Buddhas: the Buddha of enlightenment, the Buddha of the vow, the Buddha of reward of action, the Buddha of preservation of the true teaching, and the Buddha of *nirvāṇa*.<sup>85</sup> The *dharmakāya* is composed of the *dharmadhātu* Buddha and *tathatā* Buddha, while the *saṃbhogakāya* is composed of the Buddha of mind, the *samādhi* Buddha and the Buddha of wish fulfillment. However, Chengguan holds a different opinion. He asserts that the *nirmāṇakāya* is composed of the body of enlightenment, the body of the vow, the body of transformation and the body of preservation of the true teaching.<sup>86</sup> The body of mind and the body of power can be either the enjoyment body for others

(*paraśambhogakāya*) as well as the *nirmāṇakāya*. The body of merit and virtues, the body of wisdom and the body endowed with excellent qualities can be either the two kinds of *saṃbhogakāya* or the *nirmāṇakāya*. The body of *dharmatā* is the *dharmakāya*. The ten Buddhas and the ten Buddha bodies are extremely complicated in comparison with the three bodies, which describe the concept of the Buddha in a simple and clear manner. However, it is evident that the ten Buddha bodies have provided the doctrinal foundation for the formulation of the *trikāya* theory.

### 5. A Model for the Trikāya Theory

In his *Studies in the Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra*, D. T. Suzuki states that the *Laṅkāvatāra* marks a step towards the systematisation of thought in the development of the concept of the Buddha, as it mentions three Buddhas. This he claims is much like the three bodies of the *trikāya* theory.<sup>87</sup> With regard to the *dharmakāya*, the *Laṅkāvatāra* mentions the Dharma-buddha, Dharmatā-buddha, Mūlatathāgata, and the Tathatājñāna-buddha. With regard to the *saṃbhogakāya*, we find the Niṣyanda-Buddha and the Dharmatā-niṣyanda-buddha. As for the *nirmāṇakāya*, there is the Nirmāṇa Buddha. In the Chinese translations of the *Laṅkāvatāra*, in addition to the three mentioned above, the wisdom Buddha is added to the list and thus the number of Buddhas becomes four. The Niṣyanda Buddha is very different from the concept of the *saṃbhogakāya*, because as Suzuki states, it does not possess the meaning of enjoyment. The remaining two Buddhas are similar to the *dharmakāya* and the *nirmāṇakāya*. However, Suzuki emphasizes the fact that the *Laṅkāvatāra* distinguishes Buddha personalities in terms of Buddha and not in terms of body (*kāya*), which has more of a synthesizing value.<sup>88</sup>

The *\*Anuttarāśrayasūtra* translated by Paramārtha represents perhaps the last stage in the development of the concept of the Buddha before the formulation of the *trikāya* theory. The *\*Anuttarāśrayasūtra* mentions three bodies of the Buddha without giving their names.

It is stated in the *sūtra*: “Ānanda, what are the practices and abodes of the *bodhi*? Three bodies are manifested by three reasons. First the reason of profound meaning, second the reason of the magnificent and great cause, and third the reason of immeasurable merit.”<sup>89</sup> The *sūtra* explains that the first body has five characteristics and five kinds of merit. The five characteristics are those of being (1) unconditioned (*asaṃskṛta*), (2) inseparable, (3) non-dual, (4) free from all obstacles, and (5) pure by own nature. The five kinds of merit are those of being (1) immeasurable, (2) uncountable, (3) inconceivable, (4) exclusive (to the Buddhas), and (5) ultimately pure. The *sūtra* further states that there are two kinds of exclusiveness. It is not knowable to sentient beings, *śrāvakas* and *pratyekabuddhas* for it is beyond their knowledge. It is also not generally obtainable for it is the Buddha alone who can obtain it. There are five kinds of exclusive *dharma*s to *bodhi*: profound suchness (*tathatā*), immovable mastery, purity belonging to the undefiled realm, wisdom without obstacles, and complete benefit to sentient beings. This description suggests that it is none other than the *dharmakāya*.

The second body, which possesses great wisdom (*mahāprajñā*) and great compassion (*mahākaruṇā*) as its essence, flows out from pure *dharmakāya* and manifests all the infinite merit of the Tathāgata. It has five kinds of merit consisting of (1) non-discrimination, (2) spontaneity (acting without pondering), (3) benefiting sentient beings in accordance with their mentality, (4) inseparability from the *dharmakāya*, and (5) never abandoning sentient beings. It should be noticed that *niṣyanda* signifies either to ‘flow out’ or ‘flow down’. So the *Niṣyanda* Buddha in the *Laṅkāvatāra* has some connection with the second body. However, this second body does not have the meaning of enjoyment as that of the *saṃbhogakāya*.

The third body, which has form element (*rūpa*) as its essence, flows out from wisdom (*prajñā*) and great compassion. It has four kinds of merit: (1) the thirty-two major marks, (2) the eighty minor marks, (3) majesty and virtue,<sup>90</sup> and (4) power. It possesses the faculty, capacity, nature and actions of sentient beings. It manifests

various kinds of birth in the impure Buddha lands, such as Tuṣita, descent from Tuṣita, taking birth in the mother's womb, being born, being a boy, learning the eighteen sciences, playing in the garden, going forth and practising austerities, coming to the abode of attaining enlightenment, turning the wheel of Dharma at Vārāṇasī, and entering into *parinirvāṇa* at Kuśinagara. This is unmistakably the *nirmāṇakāya*.

The *\*Anuttarāśrayasūtra* describes the three bodies, in the third chapter on Bodhi, as the function of Buddhahood. *Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkāra* also discusses the three bodies, in the chapter on Bodhi, as the function of Buddhahood.<sup>91</sup> This does not seem to be coincidental. It is possible that the author of the MSA constructed the *trikāya* theory by modelling the three bodies of the *\*Anuttarāśrayasūtra* through a synthesis of philosophical teachings on the concept of the Buddha as presented in early Mahāyāna *sūtras*. There are two reasons to support this assertion.

First, the *\*Anuttarāśrayasūtra* was composed earlier than the MSA according to Nakamura, who ascribes this *sūtra* to the first of the three periods of scriptures explaining the concept of *tathāgatagarbha*.<sup>92</sup> The MSA along with the *\*Buddhagotrāśāstra* and the *Mahāyānasamgraha* are ascribed to the second period. Hakuju Ui holds the opinion that the *\*Anuttarāśrayasūtra* was composed around 350 or before 400 CE, and D. Tokiwa is of a similar opinion, namely that this *sūtra* came into existence in the age of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu.<sup>93</sup> However, Takasaki holds that the *\*Anuttarāśrayasūtra* was composed after Vasubandhu's *floruit*, sometime in the late fifth or the early sixth century, although there is no strong evidence given by Takasaki in support of his assertion.<sup>94</sup>

Second, the *\*Anuttarāśrayasūtra* discusses *bodhi* under ten topics which are (1) essence (*svabhāva*), (2) cause (*hetu*), (3) obstacle (*paripanthā*), (4) result (*phala*), (5) activity (*karma*), (6) endowment or quality (*yoga*), (7) function (*vṛtti*), (8) eternity (*nitya*), (9) exclusiveness (*āveṇika*), and (10) inconceivability (*acintya*).<sup>95</sup> The MSA discusses *bodhi* under six topics: (1) essence (*svabhāva*), (2) cause (*hetu*), (3) result (*phala*), (4) activity (*karma*), (5) endowment or quality (*yoga*), and (6) functional

modes (*vṛtti*).<sup>96</sup> The six topics of the Yogācāra School are probably a further development on the basis of the ten in the \**Anuttarāśrayasūtra*, which are less systematic.

The \**Anuttarāśrayasūtra* explains the essence of *bodhi* as the conversion of support through righteous and proper practice of the ten perfections (*pāramitā*) and the ten stages (*bhūmi*), which are inconceivable to *śrāvakas* and *pratyekabuddhas*. The Dharma to be converted is the *tathāgatagarbha* which has suchness (*tathatā*) as the result and which is the pure Dharma realm. There are four causes for *bodhi*: (1) the willingness to practise Mahāyāna, (2) the practice of the perfection of wisdom (*prajñāpāramitā*), (3) the practice of breaking the gate of the *samādhi* of empty space, and (4) the practice of the Tathāgata's great compassion. There is some overlapping in the explanation. However, the *Mahāyānasamgraha* explains these two topics concerning the *dharmakāya* clearly, stating that the essence is the suchness and the cause is the practice of the ten stages (*bhūmi*).<sup>97</sup>

The \**Buddhabhūmisūtra* also mentions three bodies in a verse at the end, but without giving any explanation. It states: "the Buddhas said that the purified realm of Dharma (*dharmadhātuvisuddha*) has a (three-fold) differentiation of function: essence, enjoyment of dharma, and transformation."<sup>98</sup> The commentator of the \**Buddhabhūmisūtra* explains these as the three bodies.<sup>99</sup> Thus, the three bodies in the \**Anuttarāśrayasūtra*, the three Buddhas in the *Laṅkāvatāra* and the three functions of the purified Dharma realm in the \**Buddhabhūmisūtra* might have served as a model for the formulation of the *trikāya* theory in the MSA.

## 6. Other Buddhas and Their Lands

The belief in the simultaneous existence of many Buddhas in different lands came into being very early, and was probably developed by the Mahāsāṃghika School as discussed in chapter two.<sup>100</sup> The early Mahāyānists followed this line of thought and developed the idea greatly. As a result, numerous Buddhas came into



existence, each one having their own particular world of responsibility. Many scholars have discussed the origins of Buddha lands or fields (*Buddhakṣetra*), and brought forward various opinions. In a recent article, Jan Nattier says that it was a 'logical' necessity of the bodhisattva ideal.<sup>101</sup> As many bodhisattvas opt for Buddhahood and there is only one to become a Buddha in a given world at a time, others must either wait for their turn like Maitreya or go to other worlds to realize Buddhahood.<sup>102</sup> As a result of this necessity, other Buddha fields were conceived. Jan Nattier is right in saying that a new way of understanding the emergence of 'Pure Land' ideas should be sought within Indian Buddhism and the idea that these paradise-like realms are a concession for the under-achieving laity no longer hold much truth. Much less is the evidence for the incorporation of foreign (e.g. Iranian) or non-Buddhist (e.g. Hindu) ideas into the process of its conception.

The origin of Pure Lands is a complex problem that involves various aspects of Buddhist thought. The following may be one of the causes that contributed to the emergence of Pure Lands in addition to the causes discussed by scholars. It was most likely a creation for the majority of lay and monastic Buddhists who were less inclined toward a *nirvāṇa* interpreted as an inactive and indefinable state likened to the blowing out of a lamp. The Tathāgata was said to be found nowhere after the attainment of *parinirvāṇa* in early Buddhism. *Nirvāṇa* was perhaps being identified too closely with nihilism. It was thus a natural consequence that life in a trouble free land such as *Sukhāvātī* became an appealing trend in Buddhist thought. A glimpse of the promises (vows) made by both Akṣobhya and Amitābha will suffice to support this. In the *Sukhāvātīvyūhasūtra*, Amitābha made the following vows concerning the inhabitants of his land: (21) "when I become a Buddha, may all the bodhisattvas and arhats in my realm have life spans of innumerable *kalpas*" and (23) "all have light on the crowns of their heads".<sup>103</sup> (15) "May all bodhisattvas in my realm have bodies the colour of burnished purple gold, with the thirty-two major and eighty minor marks, and may they all be like Buddhas." Amitābha also made the vows concerning his land:

(1) “May there be in my realm no species that flit and wriggle, no animals and *pretas*.” (3) “May my realm be spontaneously composed of the seven precious substances, be of great extent, vast and boundless, and extremely pleasant. May dwellings for living, clothing, food and drink all arise spontaneously, like those of the king of the sixth heaven.” These are just examples and similar promises are found in many of the vows of Amitābha. People who are born in these Pure Lands are assured of the upward way in their spiritual path, because they all attain the non-retrogressive state (*avaivartika*). In Mahāyāna *sūtras*, the following four Buddhas along with their Pure Lands are prominent and influential: Akṣobhya and *Abhirati*, Amitābha and *Sukhāvātī*, Maitreya and Tuṣita, and Vairocana and the Pure Land of the Lotus World.

#### 1. *Akṣobhya and Abhirati*

Akṣobhya is perhaps the first among the other contemporary Buddhas to be mentioned by name in the early Mahāyāna *sūtras*. Apart from the *\*Akṣobhyavyūha*, the *Daoxingbanruojing*, one of the earliest versions of the *Aṣṭa* in existence, mentions that a female devotee will be reborn in the Pure Land of Akṣobhya after many *kalpas* if she has no fear after listening to the *\*Prajñāpāramitāsūtra*.<sup>104</sup> The belief in Akṣobhya and his Pure Land was already established when the *Daoxingbanruojing* came into existence. Amitābha is not mentioned in this *sūtra* although Lokakṣema is the translator of the *\*Akṣobhyavyūha*, the *Daoxingbanruojing*, and the *Sukhāvātīvyūha*.<sup>105</sup> Jan Nattier, who has studied the *Akṣobhyavyūha* and compared it with the *Sukhāvātīvyūha*, also supports this assertion. She states that the ideas in the *Sukhāvātīvyūha* represent a further development of those found in the *\*Akṣobhyavyūha*.<sup>106</sup>

Not much study has been made on how and why Akṣobhya came into existence. There is an interesting discussion concerning the origin of Akṣobhya in Yinshun’s work, the *Chuqidacheng Fojian Zhi Qiyuan Yu Zhankai*.<sup>107</sup> He is of the opinion that Akṣobhya was modelled after one of the great disciples of Śākyamuni Buddha,

Aṅgulimāla, who was a notorious bandit before entering the Order. He points out that there are some similarities between Akṣobhya and Aṅgulimāla. Firstly, according to the *Akṣobhyavyūha*, Akṣobhya, while being a bodhisattva, made vows that women in his Buddha-land would safely give birth to new babies and be free from all womanly difficulties and defilements. As a result, women in his land are endowed with great virtues.<sup>108</sup> Similarly, according to the *Aṅgulimālasutta* of the *Majjhimanikāya*, Aṅgulimāla had been advised by the Buddha to say the following words to a woman who was about to give birth to a baby. “Sister, since I was born, I do not recall that I have ever intentionally deprived a living being of life. By this truth, may you be well and may your infant be well!”<sup>109</sup> Secondly, Akṣobhya made a vow before a Buddha known as ‘Great Eyes’ (大目) when he learned to practise the bodhisattva way. He pledged not to bring forth anger, malice or ire towards any living being from then on until his attainment of Buddhahood. As a result, he was named Akṣobhya, the Unperturbed.<sup>110</sup> Aṅgulimāla was also renamed Ahimsā after he became a monk. They were both renamed on a similar basis although the Sanskrit words ‘Ahimsā’ and ‘Akṣobhya’ are different.

In the *\*Akṣobhyavyūha*, Akṣobhya is described as emitting immense lights that outshine even the light of the sun and the moon, but the *sūtra* never mentions his lifespan.<sup>111</sup> His life is clearly modelled after Śākyamuni, for he is described as having descended from Tuṣita heaven, became a Buddha and finally attained *nirvāṇa*. The inhabitants of *Abhirati* are mainly arhats, as the *sūtra* states that this is a land where arhatship is easy to attain because there is no Māra.<sup>112</sup> Bodhisattvas are also mentioned as the members of this society, but the bodhisattva path is intended only for those who take up religious practice zealously, granted the demands of practice. The *Akṣobhyavyūha* represents perhaps a transitional stage from arhatship to Buddhahood which is the final aim of Mahāyāna Buddhist practice.

## 2. *Amitābha and Sukhāvātī*

Amitābha is perhaps the most widely known Buddha amongst other contemporary Buddhas. There are many studies conducted by Japanese as well as western scholars who have expressed various opinions concerning his origins. The theories brought forward by these scholars can be classified into three categories. First we find those of the non-Indian origin, mainly the sun worship of Zoroastrianism. Second the origin within non-Buddhist Indian mythology and third, the origin within Buddhist thought itself.<sup>113</sup> All these theories have been formulated on the basis of two factors: the limitless lifespan and the infinite light of Amitābha, but the first and second theories cannot explain both aspects. We now examine the third one in greater detail. First, concerning the limitless lifespan, there was already a tendency in Buddhism to eternalise the Buddha in the period of the early Buddhist schools. The Mahāsāṃghikas stated that the lifespan of Buddhas is limitless, as we have already seen in chapter three. On the basis of Mahāsāṃghika thought, the Mahāyānists further developed and eternalised the Buddha. Amitābha is perhaps the first Buddha in the history of Mahāyāna who is conceived as possessing an infinite lifespan. Second, the physical light of the Buddha has also been described as early as the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*, as shown at the beginning of this chapter. These ideas developed during the period of the early Buddhist schools, which ascribed to the Buddha a bodily light, one of the marks of a great man. In the *\*Prajñāpāramitāsūtras*, the Buddha is already described as emitting infinite physical light. Akṣobhya is also described as having infinite light. Hence the image of Amitābha as having infinite light and a limitless lifespan has its doctrinal basis in a number of *sūtras*. There was no necessity for the Mahāyānists to borrow foreign ideas to establish the concept of Amitābha since its two key elements, the limitless lifespan and the infinite light, were already present in Buddhist thought.

In ancient China, there was a debate over whether Amitābha was a *nirmāṇakāya* or a *sambhogakāya*. Huiyuan (慧遠 334-416), Zhiyi (智顓 538-597) and Jizang (吉藏

549-623) were of the opinion that Amitābha was a *nirmāṇakāya* while Shandao (善導 613-681) held the opinion that he was a *saṃbhogakāya*, an opinion which became very influential in Chinese Buddhist thought. However, evidence seems to be in favour that Amitābha was a *nirmāṇakāya*, as will be discussed later in section eight.

The inhabitants of *Sukhāvātī* are a mixture of bodhisattvas and arhats, but bodhisattvas are always mentioned before arhats. Bodhisattvas are considered in three superior grades of the nine classes found in the \**Amitāyurbuddhadhyānasūtra*.<sup>114</sup> The bodhisattva path is taken for granted and Buddhahood is the sole aim of the members of this Pure Land. Amitābha and *Sukhāvātī* are a further development of Pure Land thought when compared to Akṣobhya and *Abhirati*.

### 3. Maitreya and Tuṣita

Maitreya was already a well-known figure in early Buddhism as the future Buddha, but the existence of his Pure Land arose after that of Akṣobhya and Amitābha. In the \**Ekottarāgama*, there is a *sūtra* which says that Śākyamuni entrusted his teachings to the four great disciples and asked them not to enter *nirvāṇa* until Maitreya's advent in the world.<sup>115</sup> The text further explains that Maitreya will have three assemblies and there will be 9.6 billion beings attaining arhatship in the first assembly, 9.4 billion in the second and 9.2 billion in the third. It seems that arhatship is easily obtained in the time of Maitreya because individuals of that time possess a high moral character. It is perhaps this idea of awaiting Maitreya's appearance in the world that gave rise to the idea of being born in his Pure Land of Tuṣita. There are two reasons for one to be reborn in Tuṣita and to wait there rather than in this *Sahā* world. First, if one remains in this world, one may not be a human at the time when Maitreya appears. One may thus lack the chance to attend the great assemblies of Maitreya and listen to his teaching. Second, if one is reborn in Tuṣita, one is ensured attendance at the assemblies of Maitreya when he descends to this world. One will reach Buddhahood after attaining the irreversible stage through

listening to Maitreya's preaching in the Pure Land. The *Maitreya-vyākaraṇa* states that one will be reborn in Tuṣita Heaven if one practices strenuously and recites the name of Maitreya. One will overcome the bad *karma* accumulated in nine billion *kalpas* and attain the irreversible stage through listening to Maitreya's preaching. One descends from Tuṣita to listen to Maitreya, to meet all the Buddhas of the present (*bhadra-kalpa*) and the next age (*nakṣatra kalpa*), and then to receive predictions given by all these Buddhas.<sup>116</sup>

#### 4. *Vairocana and the Pure Land of the Lotus World*

The earliest mention of Vairocana Buddha is perhaps in the second chapter of the *\*Avatamsaka* translated by Buddhahadra in 317-402.<sup>117</sup> In this *sūtra*, Vairocana is described as having attained enlightenment immeasurable *kalpas* ago and abiding in the world born from the lotus (*padma-garbha-loka-dhātu*) which has been purified by him in as many *kalpas* as the atoms in the *asaṃkhyeya* worlds while he was a bodhisattva.<sup>118</sup> The infinite beams of light of Vairocana illuminate the worlds of the ten directions, and great bodhisattvas as numerous as the atoms of one billion Buddha worlds, each accompanied by as many bodhisattva retinues as the atoms of one Buddha world. They all attend Vairocana's assembly and listen to his teaching. Each of these bodhisattvas emanates as many beams of light as the atoms of ten Buddha worlds from each pore of his bodily hairs and from each beam there appears as many bodhisattvas as the atoms of ten Buddha worlds. All these bodhisattvas are capable of teaching by employing various Dharma Doors (法門 methods of practice) to liberate numerous sentient beings from suffering within one thought moment. As many sentient beings as the atoms of Mount Sumeru become established in virtue and wisdom. They are not thus ordinary bodhisattvas, but bodhisattvas of higher attainment. Then there follows a description of the Pure Land of Vairocana in the *sūtra*, in which there is no mention of arhats. The development of the Pure Land from that of Akṣobhya to that of Vairocana may thus be distinguished. In the Pure Land of

Akṣobhya, arhatship is the main object of attainment while the bodhisattva path is recommended for a few only. In Amitābha's land the bodhisattva path enjoys a wider following than the arhat path. The Pure Land of Vairocana is of the highest level, for only bodhisattvas are found therein. For this reason, Fazang and other ancient Chinese masters considered Vairocana as the *saṃbhogakāya*.

Vairocana Buddha in the *\*Avataṃsaka* may be considered as the *saṃbhogakāya* of Śākyamuni and the Lotus World his Pure Land. In the chapter on the light of the minor marks of the Buddha in the *\*Avataṃsaka*, it is stated that when Vairocana passed away in Tuṣita Heaven and took abode in the womb of Mahāmāyā in the family of Śuddhodana, many bodhisattvas also came to Jambudvīpa.<sup>119</sup> In the chapter on the entry into the *Dharmadhātu* of the *\*Avataṃsaka*, Mahāmāyā speaks to Sudhana: "I have already accomplished the Dharma Door of Great Vow and Wisdom, by which I became the mother of Vairocana Tathāgata. From my right side I gave birth to Prince Siddhartha in the palace of Śuddhodana in Kapilavastu in Jambudvīpa."<sup>120</sup> It is explicit that the authors of the *\*Avataṃsaka* considered that Śākyamuni and Vairocana were the same Buddha in different bodies. The *\*Brahmajālasūtra*, the Vinaya text of bodhisattvas reputed to be translated by Kumārajīva, gives us a clear picture of the relationship between Śākyamuni and Vairocana. This *sūtra* states that Śākyamuni was originally named Vairocana, who lives in the world of a lotus platform with a thousand petals. He manifests a thousand Śākyamunis, one in each petal world with a hundred million Sumerus, a hundred million suns and moons, a hundred million Jambudvīpas and a hundred million Śākyamunis each sitting under a *bodhi* tree expounding the bodhisattva doctrine.<sup>121</sup> In this *sūtra*, Śākyamuni is clearly considered as a *nirmāṇakāya* of Vairocana.

## 7. The Classification of Buddha Lands

The term *Buddhakṣetra* (Buddha land) has two meanings. First it is the land in which the Buddha performs the Buddha activities to liberate sentient beings. Second it

is the Pure Land in which only Buddhas live. One of the *\*Prajñāpāramitāsūtras* states: “The three kinds of sages and the ten categories of holy ones live in the fruit of their actions, it is only the Buddha who abides in the Pure Land.”<sup>122</sup> Here the three kinds of sages refer to the *śrāvakas*, *pratyekabuddhas*, and *bodhisattvas* before the attainment of the ten stages (*bhūmi*), while the ten categories of holy ones refer to the bodhisattvas of the ten stages. The first type of *Buddhakṣetra* can be either pure or impure. In some lands only the liberated live, such as the *Sukhāvātī* and Tuṣita Pure Land. By contrast, in this *Sahā* world both the liberated and sentient beings live together. The first type of *Buddhakṣetra* originated first, along with the idea of other Buddhas. It is modelled after Śākyamuni Buddha and his land. The development of the concept of Pure Land can be roughly divided into three stages.

First, the belief in the existence of *Buddhakṣetras* is already found in the second century CE. Both the *\*Akṣobhyavyūha* and the *Sukhāvātīvyūha* translated by Lokakṣema have descriptions of Pure Lands. These Pure Lands are modelled after the ordinary world, for descriptions of the physical world in these two *sūtras* are very similar to our *Sahā* world. Like Śākyamuni, the Buddhas in these lands will attain *nirvāṇa* after they have disseminated their teachings. The only difference between these Pure Lands and our *Sahā* world is that the former are pure and full of liberated ones such as bodhisattvas and arhats while the latter is impure. This represents the first and primary development of the concept of *Buddhakṣetra*.

The second stage is the development of the Pure Land in which only the Buddhas live by sharing the enjoyment of Dharma together with great bodhisattvas. The *Rulaixingxianjing* states that the land of the Buddha is immeasurable. The bodhisattvas number as many as the atoms in a hundred thousand Buddha lands. They all attend the assembly by the virtue of the Buddha’s power.<sup>123</sup> The *\*Avatamsaka*, as discussed above, mentions that Vairocana Buddha abides in the Pure Land of the Lotus World with countless bodhisattvas who come from the ten directions to listen to his teaching.<sup>124</sup> It is said in the *Shizhudianjiejing* (Sūtra on the cutting of the tie of



passions in the ten dwellings) that north of our *Sahā* world, as many Buddha lands as the sand particles in 1.3 billion Ganges Rivers away, there lies a world named Immovable (不動轉). The Buddha teaching there is named Illuminating Mind (照意). In this land, even the names of *śrāvakas* and *pratyekabuddhas* are unheard of, and there are only the trainees of the Mahāyāna who have attained the bodhisattva stages (*bhūmi*).<sup>125</sup> In these descriptions, the physical appearance of these Pure Lands is completely different from our *Sahā* world, as they are built on lotuses. Both the *\*Avataṃsaka* and the *\*Brahmajālasūtra* state that Vairocana lives in a great lotus world. The *\*Brahmajālasūtra* even mentions that the lotus has a thousand petals as discussed above. The Buddhas in these Pure Lands live eternally because there is no mention of their *parinirvāṇa*. The inhabitants of these Pure Lands are only bodhisattvas.

The third stage is the development of the *dharmatā* land in which only the *dharmakāya* Buddha abides, with no bodhisattvas. This type of Buddha land is precisely in accord with the second meaning of the term *Buddhakṣetra*. The *\*Vijñaptimātratāsiddhiśāstra* translated by Xuanzang states that the *dharmakāya* has the *dharmatā* as its abode. Although the body and the land are one the same, yet on account of its characteristics it is called a body, and on account of its nature it is called a land.<sup>126</sup> Kuiji further explains that the land of *dharmatā* is *tathatā*, the true nature of all things. It is named a body on account of the meaning of enlightenment, and a land on account of the nature of *dharmatā*.<sup>127</sup> Thus the *dharmakāya* and its land are one and the same, as both possess *tathatā*, the true nature of all things, as their substance.

*Buddhakṣetras* are closely related to the issue of Buddha bodies. Hence, the classification of Buddha lands is mainly in accordance with the *trikāya* theory. Lamotte has made a good survey of this, although his study is limited to Indian works, *sūtras* and *śāstras* translated into Chinese.<sup>128</sup> Ancient Chinese scholars analysed the theory of *Buddhakṣetra* and classified them into various categories. They have been systematised as two, three or four types in accordance with the Buddha bodies under

consideration.

The two types of *Buddhakṣetra* are the real and the created. According to Kuiji, the real Pure Land is the land of *dharmatā*, in which only the *dharmakāya* Buddha abides. All other *Buddhakṣetra* belong to the created one, which is either pure or impure and in which the *rūpakāya* Buddha abides.<sup>129</sup> The three types of *Buddhakṣetras* are classified according to the three Buddha bodies, the land of the *dharmakāya*, the land of the *sambhogakāya* and the land of the *nirmāṇakāya*. The most influential classification is the four types of Buddha land. There are two Chinese Buddhist Schools that proposed different classifications of these Buddha lands.

First, the Tiantai (天台) School classifies Buddha lands into the following four: (1) the land in which both sentient beings and the liberated abide, (2) the land in which liberated ones with minor defilement such as arhats, *pratyekabuddhas* and bodhisattvas before entering the *bhūmis* abide, (3) the land in which only great bodhisattvas abide, (4) the land of eternal serenity and illumination in which only Buddhas abide. This classification is simple and also includes all the variations and differences of the Buddha lands described in the *sūtras*. However, this is a classification utilising the Buddhas as loci, and not the inhabitants of the Pure Land themselves.

Second is the Faxiang School or Cittamātratā that classifies *Buddhakṣetras* into four in accordance with the four Buddha bodies.

(1) The Pure Land of true nature in which only the *dharmakāya* Buddha abides. Kuiji explains that the land of the *svabhāvakāya* is *tathatā*, the true nature of all *dharmas*. Therefore, the *dharmakāya* and its *kṣetra* are one and the same. It is called a *kāya* on account of its characteristics of enlightenment and a *kṣetra* on account of its true nature (*dharmatā*). Both the Buddha *kāya* and *kṣetra* are neither form, nor mind, nor associated mental activities, but are established by reason of true nature.<sup>130</sup> Therefore, it cannot be described in dimensions of size. On account of its characteristics, it is infinite like all pervading empty space. All Buddhas attain this

same *dharmatā* land which is one and without any sustenance and which is entered through the gate of the signlessness (*animitta*) because one realizes the suchness (*tathatā*) of all *dharmas* by the observation of *animitta*. According to the Yogācāra, the *dharmatā* land is the *dharmatā* mind, non-discriminating transcendental wisdom (*nirvikalpakajñāna*).<sup>131</sup>

(2) The Pure Land of *svasaṃbhogakāya* in which only the Buddhas abide. Sthiramati states, “There is a Pure Land where there is no suffering and which is not produced by the force of *karma* and *kleśa*... but produced by great vow, supportive cause and pure skilful (*kuśala*) deeds. This land is inconceivable and known only to the Buddhas, not known even by those who have attained pure *samādhi*, not to mention those liberated ones who still possess *vitarka* and *vicāra* thoughts.”<sup>132</sup> Kuiji asserts that this is the Pure Land of the *svasaṃbhogakāya*, which is pure consciousness (the *āryavijñāna*) associated with mirror wisdom (*ādarśa-jñāna*). The latter transforms itself into a pure *Buddhakṣetra* adorned with various jewels. It consists of the maturation of pure causes that a bodhisattva cultivates whilst in training. The transformation commences the moment the bodhisattva becomes a Buddha and lasts eternally. The land of the *svasaṃbhogakāya* pervades the entire cosmos without limit and each Buddha produces a different, limitless *svasaṃbhogakāya* land without obstruction by magical power. This land is sustained by the enjoyment of *dharmas* and is entered through the gate of wishlessness (*apraṇihita*) as Buddhas have no desire in the three realms (*dhātu*).

The above two kinds of Buddha lands are exclusively for Buddhas without retinue. The only difference between the two is that the Pure Land of the *dharmakāya* is one and the same to all Buddhas while the Pure Land of the *svasaṃbhogakāya* is specific to each Buddha.

(3) Next is the Pure Land of *parasam̐bhogakāya*, where the Buddha abides by sharing the enjoyment of Dharma with the great bodhisattvas. With regard to this Pure Land, different *sūtras* present it differently with a common factor, the lotus by which

this land is established. According to the *Brahmajālasūtra*, Vairocana Buddha sits on a great lotus with a thousand petals and each petal is a world in which there is a Śākyamuni, the *nirmāṇakāya*.<sup>133</sup> In the *\*Daśabhūmikasūtraśāstra* Vasubandhu states similarly that when a bodhisattva enters the *samādhi* of *sarvajñā-jñāna*, a great treasure lotus appears on which the bodhisattva sits. This bodhisattva is surrounded by many other bodhisattvas sitting on lotuses.<sup>134</sup> But according to the *\*Yogācārabhūmiśāstra*, there is a Pure Land which is beyond the Śuddhāvāsa heaven. Bodhisattvas in the tenth stage are born there.<sup>135</sup> According to Asvabhāva, the western *Sukhāvātī* is the Pure Land where the great bodhisattvas live.<sup>136</sup> Kuiji explains that just as an ordinary kingdom consists of the people as inhabitants in the physical world, the land of the *paraśambhogakāya* consists of great bodhisattvas as inhabitants with gold and silver as surroundings. This Pure Land manifests as large or small, superior or inferior, according to the temperament of the great bodhisattvas of the tenth *bhūmi*.<sup>137</sup> The great bodhisattvas enter this Pure Land through the gate of great emptiness (*śūnyatā*) and are sustained by the enjoyment of the dharma.

(4) The land of the *nirmāṇakāya* is either pure or impure. The Pure Lands in which liberated ones such as arhats and bodhisattvas abide include *Sukhāvātī* of Amitābha and *Abhirati* of Akṣobhya. The impure lands in which both the liberated ones and sentient beings live include the *Sahā* world. This is similar to the first category of Tiantai School. The Buddha in this land is the transformation body arisen out of compassion for suffering beings.

## 8. Amitābha and Akṣobhya as Nirmāṇakāyas

Japanese scholars such as Takeuchi, following Chinese masters such as Daochuo (道綽 562-645), assert that Amitābha is a *saṃbhogakāya*.<sup>138</sup> Daochuo is perhaps the first person to make such an assertion explicitly in writing.<sup>139</sup> In his *Anleji*<sup>140</sup> Daochuo states, "Amitābha in the present is a *saṃbhogakāya* and the paradise land adorned with jewels is a Reward Land."<sup>141</sup> However, in the same text some questions

were raised: "The *saṃbhogakāya* is eternal. Why does the *Sūtra on Avalokiteśvara's Prediction* state that after the *parinirvāṇa* of Amitābha, Avalokiteśvara bodhisattva would become a Buddha?" Daochuo replies: "This is the *saṃbhogakāya* that manifests birth and death, it is not that it really attains *nirvāṇa*. The *sūtra* also states that after the *parinirvāṇa* of Amitābha, those sentient beings who have good roots in deep faith are still able to see the Buddha. This is a testimony."<sup>142</sup> However, Daochuo's argument is weak, as David Chappell has pointed out. Nevertheless, it has exercised a tremendous influence on Chinese Pure Land Buddhism.<sup>143</sup>

Before Daochuo, Amitābha was regarded as a *nirmāṇakāya* according to his *Anleji*. "According to ancient tradition, Amitābha is considered as a *nirmāṇakāya* by all and his Buddha land is also a land for a *nirmāṇakāya*."<sup>144</sup> This is confirmed by David Chappell's analysis of Amitābha in the writings of Sengzhao (僧肇 375-414), Jingying Huiyuan (淨影慧遠 523-592) and Zhiyi (智顓 538-597).<sup>145</sup> So Amitābha, just as Śākyamuni, should be considered a *nirmāṇakāya* and not as a *saṃbhogakāya*.

Before going into detailed discussion, we must first clarify the definition of the three *kāyas*. According to the concept of "*trikāya*" as explained in the *Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra*, all three "*kāyas*" are equal and eternal. "On account of their basis,<sup>146</sup> mind<sup>147</sup> and karma, the three *kāyas* are equal. With regard to their essence,<sup>148</sup> non-interruption and continuity, the three *kāyas* are eternal." The commentary on the *Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra* explains, "By the three kinds of *kāyas*, all Buddhas are completely equal. On account of their basis, all Buddhas are equal with regard to *svabhāvakāya* because the *dharmadhātu* is the same. On account of their mind, all Buddhas are equal with regard to the *saṃbhogakāya* because the Buddha mind is the same. On account of their karma, all Buddhas are equal with regard to the *nirmāṇakāya* because the Buddha's deeds are the same. Again, all Buddhas are eternal with regard to the *svabhāvakāya* because the *svabhāva* is eternal and without defilement. All Buddhas are eternal with regard to the *saṃbhogakāya* because they teach the Dharma without interruption. All Buddhas are eternal with regard to the

*nirmāṇakāya* because though it disappears from here it reappears there."<sup>149</sup>

The three *kāyas* manifested by Buddhas as defined above are both equal and eternal, but the *nirmāṇakāya* disappears from one place and reappears in another place in order to liberate sentient beings. Such disappearance and reappearance are the *parinirvāṇa* and the birth of a *nirmāṇakāya*, which are the activities of a Buddha. According to the *Mahāyānasamgraha*, the *nirmāṇakāya* performs eight acts in the world in order to benefit sentient beings. They include descending from Tuṣita heaven, being born, indulging in desire, leaving home, practising various forms of asceticism, attaining great enlightenment, turning the wheel of Dharma, and entering *parinirvāṇa*.<sup>150</sup> However, there is no such things concerning the concept of the "*saṃbhogakāya*". Amitābha in accordance with this definition should be considered as a *nirmāṇakāya* on the following three grounds.

First, according to the *Sukhāvativyūha*, when Amitābha was a bhikṣu named Dharmākara, he made twenty-four or forty-eight vows to become a Buddha before Lokeśvararāja Tathāgata.<sup>151</sup> He also vowed to have his Buddha land of such purity that it would be free from all evils such as those found in our *Sahā* world. Accordingly, Dharmākara attained enlightenment and became Amitābha Buddha in his Pure Land, *Sukhāvātī*. Śākyamuni, in the same way, also became a Buddha in this *Sahā* world after he made vows to liberate suffering sentient beings in front of the ancient Buddha Śākyamuni in the first *asaṃkhyeya kalpa*.<sup>152</sup> It is also said in the MPPŚ that Śākyamuni vowed to liberate those in the defiled world through the Dharma. He did not appear in the world for enjoying happiness and wealth.<sup>153</sup> If Śākyamuni is regarded as a *nirmāṇakāya*, then in the same way, Amitābha should also be regarded as a *nirmāṇakāya* because they both became Buddhas in their respective Buddha lands in accordance with their vows for the sake of specific living beings.

How does one explain that Amitābha enjoys a limitless life span and immeasurable light in his *Sukhāvātī* due to his past merit? The answer to this question is that Amitābha's qualities of a limitless life-span and immeasurable light are

adaptations to accord with and liberate particular living beings in *Sukhāvātī* who also enjoy long life-spans. The situation is similar to Śākyamuni, who made a display of having lived for only eighty years in order to suit the expectations of sentient beings in our *Sāha* world. In fact, he could have enjoyed an immeasurable life-span as explained in the \**Saddharmapuṇḍarīkasūtra*. The \**Avatamsaka* states, “There are Buddhas appearing in (different) worlds making a display of *rūpakāyas* which pervade all over the cosmos (*dharmadhātu*), some have short life-spans while others live for limitless *kalpas*.”<sup>154</sup> The author of the MPPŚ also explains this point clearly: “Thus the life-spans of all Buddhas are, in fact, immeasurable, but they make displays of either short or long life-spans (in accordance with the beings of that particular world) in order to liberate them.”<sup>155</sup>

The *Vimalakīrtinirdeśasūtra* makes the same point, “All Buddhas and Tathāgatas are equal in merit, but they make displays of having different Buddha lands in order to teach and liberate sentient beings.”

The *Vimalakīrtinirdeśasūtra* states, “Ānanda, all Buddhas are the same so far as the perfections of the Buddha-qualities are concerned. These include: their forms, colours, radiance, bodies, marks, nobility, morality, concentration, wisdom, liberation, gnosis, vision of liberation, strengths, fearlessness, special Buddha-qualities, great love, great compassion, helpful intentions, attitudes, practices, paths, the length of lives, teaching of the Dharma, development and liberation of living beings, and purification of Buddha lands. Therefore, they are all called *Samyaksambuddhas*, Tathāgatas, and Buddhas.”<sup>156</sup>

Secondly, in all three Chinese translations of the *Sukhāvātīvyūhasūtra* (T12, No.361, No.362 and No.364), it is said that once Amitābha attains *parinirvāṇa*, the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara will become a Buddha, the lord of *Sukhāvātī*, who in turn will teach there. “After the *parinirvāṇa* of Amitābha, Bodhisattva Alougen (Avalokiteśvara)<sup>157</sup> will attain Buddhahood and will be the lord teaching the Dharma. He will liberate individuals of the world as well as gods of the eight directions, above

and below, by facilitating the *nirvāṇa* of all beings. His merits will be the same as Amitābha.”<sup>158</sup>

There is no *parinirvāṇa* with regard to the *saṃbhogakāya* as it is eternal. The *nirmāṇakāya*, though eternal, makes a display of birth, enlightenment and *parinirvāṇa* as Śākyamuni Buddha did. It follows that Amitābha cannot be regarded as a *saṃbhogakāya*, for he also attains *parinirvāṇa*.

Thirdly, according to the MSA, the *saṃbhogakāya* enjoys the Dharma to its fullest realization by sharing it *only* with the assembly of great bodhisattvas.<sup>159</sup>

The commentary on the MSA explains it thus: “All Buddhas have three bodies, the first is the *svabhāvakāya* and its characteristic is transformation. The second is the *saṃbhogakāya* which shares the food of Dharma with the great assembly. The third is the *nirmāṇakāya* which works for the benefit of beings through its manifestations. It should be noted that the *svabhāvakāya* is the support of both the *saṃbhogakāya* and the *nirmāṇakāya*.”<sup>160</sup>

In the *Mahāyānasamgrahabhāṣya*, Vasubandhu explains this point further by saying that the *saṃbhogakāya* serves only to bring bodhisattvas to maturity. “(The statement) ‘*Dharmakāya* is the support for various *saṃbhogakāyas*’ means that the *saṃbhogakāyas* are supported by the *dharmakāya*. Why must they be thus supported? It is because they bring all bodhisattvas to maturity. Without (the help of) such *saṃbhogakāyas*, bodhisattvas who have entered the first stage (*bhūmi*) would not come to maturity. (The statement) ‘it is the support for the various *nirmāṇakāyas*’ illustrates that these *nirmāṇakāyas* are supported by the *dharmakāya*. Why must they be thus supported? It is because they generally bring all *śrāvakas* to maturity. Without the help of these *nirmāṇakāyas*, *śrāvakas* of little faith and meagre understanding would not come to maturity. The term ‘generally’ should be understood to imply the inclusion of bodhisattvas who are in the stages of (initial) understanding and practice.”<sup>161</sup> From these explanations, it is clear that the *saṃbhogakāya* shares the pure Dharma with great bodhisattvas, bringing only bodhisattvas to maturity. The



*nirmāṇakāyas* bring to maturity the *śrāvakas* as well as bodhisattvas in their initial stage. Amitābha however, teaches various kinds of beings aside from bodhisattvas and *arhats*. The larger *Sukhāvātīvyūhasūtra* explains:

“When Amitābha delivers a *sūtra* to bodhisattvas and *arhats* who assemble in the teaching hall, immeasurable bodhisattvas, *arhats*, gods, people and other beings fly to where Amitābha is, sit down and listen to the *sūtra* after paying their respects (to Amitābha). ... After Amitābha has proclaimed the *sūtra* to bodhisattvas and *arhats*, amongst the gods and people, those who have not attained the path attain it, those who have not attained *śrotāpanna* attain it... *sakṛdāgāmin*, ... *anāgamin*, ... *arhat*, and those who have not attained the irreversible (*avaivarta*) stage of the bodhisattva career attain it.”<sup>162</sup>

Since Amitābha teaches various kinds of beings in his *Sukhāvātī* in addition to great bodhisattvas, Amitābha cannot be regarded as a *sambhogakāya*. More intuitively he is to be regarded as a *nirmāṇakāya* as he attained Buddhahood for the sake of particular beings possessing a long life-span and special powers. As quoted above, Vasubandhu explains that it is the *nirmāṇakāya* which brings to maturity the *śrāvakas* as well as bodhisattvas. In the same way, Akṣobhya does the same work in his Buddha land *Abhirati*. He is a *nirmāṇakāya* manifested for the sake of particular beings, with specific reference to womankind. Śākyamuni, Amitābha and Akṣobhya attained enlightenment in their respective Buddha lands of *Sahā*, *Sukhāvātī* and *Abhirati* in accordance with their vows. Belonging to the same category, they assumed different *nirmāṇakāyas* in order to teach and liberate particular beings in their respective Buddha lands. Śākyamuni lived for only eighty years because the life-span of people in the *Sahā* world is around a hundred years while Amitābha has a long life because the beings in the *Sukhāvātī* generally have long lives. In the end the three Buddhas attain *parinirvāṇa* in their Buddha lands after they have completed their Buddha activities. Since Śākyamuni is considered a *nirmāṇakāya*, Amitābha and Akṣobhya must also be treated in the same way.

<sup>1</sup> Mahāyāna *sūtras* are extremely difficult to date as they are all attributed to the historical Buddha, Śākyamuni. However, we can conventionally use the date of the Chinese translation as a working hypothesis.

<sup>2</sup> According to the MPPŚ (T25, 309a), not only does the Buddha have bodily light, but gods, bodhisattvas, and other beings also have it. The gods have bodily light because their minds are pure due to their practice of generosity and discipline. People who make offerings to stupas, Buddha images and monasteries with bright objects such as lamps, jewels, a mirror and so forth also have bodily light. Those who practise the concentration of visualizing Buddhas also have bodily light. Again, those who teach and liberate ignorant sentient beings have the light of wisdom and also bodily light. These are the causes for having bodily light.

<sup>3</sup> D ii, 134. "It is so, Ānanda. There are two occasions, Ānanda, when the skin of the Tathāgata appears exceedingly clear and radiant. Which are these two? The night, Ānanda, when the Tathāgata becomes fully enlightened in unsurpassed, supreme Enlightenment, and the night when the Tathāgata comes to his final passing away into the state of *nibbāna* in which no element of clinging remains. These, Ānanda, are the two occasions on which the skin of the Tathāgata appears exceedingly clear and radiant." This translation is adapted from *The Dialogues of the Buddha*, II, 146. The same saying is also found in the Chinese *Dūrghāgama*, T1, 19c, 佛告阿難：有二因緣，如來光色有殊於常，一者佛初得道，成無上正真覺時，二者臨欲滅度，捨於性命般涅槃時。阿難，以此二緣，光色殊常。The other three independent Chinese translations of the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* also mention this. T1, 168b-c, T1, 184a, T1, 196b-c.

<sup>4</sup> T25, 308c.

<sup>5</sup> T25, 399b. According to Fazang (T35, 499c), there are four kinds of light: (1) the light of events such as comets, cloud and stars, (2) the light of Dharma to manifest the methods of practice, (3) the light of reason such as blue, yellow, red and white that is not subject to birth and death, and (4) the light of non-obstruction, which is the first of three kinds of light that manifest without obstacles.

<sup>6</sup> T25, 399c.

<sup>7</sup> T25, 308c. After saying that the Buddha emitted light at different stages in his life, the MPPŚ states: "Thus, this is the light of supernatural power as it is said in the *sūtras*."

<sup>8</sup> According to the \**Mahāvibhāṣā*, (T27, 64a) light is considered as a kind of *rūpa* (form). There are twenty-one kinds of visible forms (*varṇa-rūpa*): (1) blue (*nīla*), (2) yellow (*pīta*), (3) red (*lohita*), (4) white (*avadāta*), (5) cloud (*abhra*), (6) smoke (*dhūma*), (7) dust (*rajas*), (8) fog (*mahikā*), (9) shadow (*chāyā*), (10) heat (*ātapa* is very difficult to render into English), such as the flame of the sun, (11) light (*āloka*), such as the light of the moon, stars, lightening and jewels, (12) darkness (*andhakāra*), (13) long, (14) short, (15) squareness, (16) roundness, (17) high, (18) low, (19) right and (20) not right in position. Sometimes, (21) emptiness is added to make the number twenty-one. The light in discussion consists of *ātapa* (heat) and *āloka* (light). *Ātapa* means something which can emit both light and heat while *āloka* means something that reflects light, and does not necessarily have heat according to the *Vibhāṣā*.

<sup>9</sup> T27, 506a.

<sup>10</sup> T25, 311c.

<sup>11</sup> T12, 343b.

<sup>12</sup> T27, 506a-c.

<sup>13</sup> T8, 44a.

<sup>14</sup> T15, 655b.

<sup>15</sup> T15, 654c.

<sup>16</sup> T26, 131a.

<sup>17</sup> There are two kinds of aid bestowed by the Buddha: the manifested or external aid bestowed by the Buddha (顯加) as the blessings and powers pertaining to this life, and the invisible aid bestowed by the Buddha (冥加) in the abandonment of negativities, increasing virtue, etc. Fazang explains that the Buddha bestows aid to people in three ways: (1) by words of the mouth to bestow his eloquence, (2) by the mind to bestow his wisdom, and (3) by the body to bestow his power. The first and third are the manifested aids and the second is invisible aid. See, T35, 499c.

<sup>18</sup> Chapter twenty-nine of the \**Avataṃsaka* translated by Buddhahadra is entitled the Ocean of Marks of the Tathāgata and chapter thirty is on the Merit of Light of the Buddha's Minor Marks. T9, 601a-606c.

<sup>19</sup> Thomas Cleary (1985), Vol. ii, 257.

<sup>20</sup> T9, 605c.

<sup>21</sup> T9, 605a-c.

<sup>22</sup> T9, 2b. According to Dharmarakṣa's translation the Buddha emanates rays of light from his face and mouth. T9, 63c.

<sup>23</sup> 《正法華經》T9, 63c and 《妙法蓮華經》T9, 2b.

<sup>24</sup> 《放光般若經》T8, 1b-c; 《光讚經》T8, 147b-c; 《摩訶般若波羅蜜經》T8, 217b-c.

<sup>25</sup> T25, 220b.

<sup>26</sup> T9, 593b.

<sup>27</sup> T26, 195b.

<sup>28</sup> T35, 499c.

<sup>29</sup> T25, 121c. 是法性身滿十方虛空無量無邊，色像端正，相好莊嚴，無量光明，無量音聲。The translation is mine.

<sup>30</sup> T25, 712b. 是中是法性身，佛身無量，無邊光明，說法音聲，遍滿十方國土。The translation is mine.

<sup>31</sup> T16, 711a.

<sup>32</sup> T9, 593b.

<sup>33</sup> T10, 264b.

<sup>34</sup> T25, 126b.

<sup>35</sup> T31, 223b.

<sup>36</sup> T32, 639c.

<sup>37</sup> T32, 154a.

<sup>38</sup> T9, 599b.

<sup>39</sup> T10, 492a. 一如來身，法界所雨，演三世藏無極道法，是法光明。The translation is mine.

<sup>40</sup> T9, 540b. 菩薩清淨，微妙法身，悉從諸佛，真法化生。明淨法燈，饒益眾生，說無量法，除滅憂惱。The translation is mine.

<sup>41</sup> T9, 436a-438a.

<sup>42</sup> T30, 330a-b.

<sup>43</sup> T31, 146a.

<sup>44</sup> T36, 309c.

<sup>45</sup> T31, 359b.

<sup>46</sup> T31, 425a.

<sup>47</sup> T31, 225b. The experiential wisdom (如量智), also named the conventional or discriminating wisdom, apprehends the function of the myriad phenomena. The undefiled, non-discriminating wisdom is also named the wisdom of principle (如理智) that understands things as they are. It is the wisdom of direct insight into the principle of reality.

<sup>48</sup> T25, 303b-c. The \**Buddhabhūmiśāstra* (T26, 298b) states that *śrāvakas* comprise the internal retinue, because *śrāvakas* are always with the Buddha and their physical appearances are also like the Buddha. The great bodhisattvas are the great retinue. Although the *śrāvakas* are in one assembly with the great bodhisattvas, yet the former cannot see the latter because of their own *karma*. However, they can see the *nirmānakāya* in the impure land.

<sup>49</sup> T31, 606a-c.

<sup>50</sup> The twelve accomplishments, according to the \**Śatasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*, are: 1. Ananta-parigraha, 2. deva-nāga-yakṣa-gandharvāsura-garuḍa-kinnara-mahoragaruta-jñāna, 3. paripūrṇa-pratibhā-nirdeśa-jñāna, 4. garbhāvakrānti-sampat, 5. Kula-sampat, 6. jāti-sampat, 7. Gotra-sampat, 8. paricāra-sampat (or parivāra-sampat), 9. Janma-sampat, 10. abhikramaṇa-sampat, 11. bodhivṛkṣa-vūha-sampat, and 12. Sarva-guṇa-paripūri-sampat. See Hisao Inagaki (1963), 792-797. According to the *Guangzanjing* (光讚經), it is in the tenth *bhūmi* that a bodhisattva should fulfil twelve accomplishments and a bodhisattva in the tenth stage is already a Buddha. (See T8, 197a.) In other \**Prajñāpāramitāsūtras*, it is in the ninth *bhūmi* that a bodhisattva fulfils the twelve accomplishments. (T8, 27c; 257b-c.) Perhaps the *Guangzanjing* represents the early stage of development of the ten bodhisattva *bhūmis*.

<sup>51</sup> Inagaki Hisao (1963), 792-797.

<sup>52</sup> 《放光般若經》(T8, 72c) 十住菩薩摩訶薩當名之爲如來。《光讚經》(T8, 197a) 第十菩薩摩訶薩者，即謂是佛。《摩訶般若波羅蜜經》(T8, 257c) 十地菩薩當知如佛。

<sup>53</sup> T9, 111b.

<sup>54</sup> T8, 259b. Kumārajīva's translation of the \**Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā* says: "What is the accomplishment of bodhisattva retinue? It is because of having only the bodhisattva-Mahāsattva retinue." This means that great bodhisattvas in the ninth stage (*bhūmi*) have only the bodhisattva-Mahāsattva retinue. And this is the accomplishment of bodhisattva retinue.

<sup>55</sup> T25, 303b-c.

<sup>56</sup> T10, 503a-526c.

<sup>57</sup> T9, 442a. 諸佛大眷屬，清淨菩薩眾，斯從十方來，跏趺正安坐。The translation is mine.

<sup>58</sup> T9, 422b-426c.

<sup>59</sup> T35, 496c-497a.

<sup>60</sup> T35, 495c. "依此經，第二七日於樹王下，爲海會菩薩轉無盡法輪，明是一乘。"

<sup>61</sup> T9, 631b, T10, 279a. Thomas Cleary translates the passage as follows: At that time, the World-Honoured One was in the country of Magadha, in the forest, in the shrine of universal light at the site of enlightenment, sitting on a lotus lion seat; he had completely fulfilled ineffable enlightenment, put an end to afflictions and views, and arrived at formless truth. Abiding in the abode of Buddhas, he had attained the equanimity of Buddhas and arrived at non-obstruction in the states of imperturbability. All his actions were unimpeded. He stood in the inconceivable and saw through all time. His body continually pervaded all lands; his knowledge always comprehended

all things. He understood all activities. He exhausted all doubts. His knowledge was that sought by all enlightening beings. He had arrived at the non-dual ultimate perfection of Buddhahood and fully attained the equal liberation of the enlightened. He had realized the stage of impartiality of Buddhas, which is without extremes or middle, extending throughout the cosmos, equal to space.

<sup>62</sup> T9, 631b, and T10, 279a.

<sup>63</sup> T16, 720c.

<sup>64</sup> T35, 685b. The MS discusses these twenty-one qualities at T31, 121c-122a, 141c. These twenty-one qualities are different from the twenty-one qualities of the *dharmakāya* discussed in the tenth chapter of the MS.

<sup>65</sup> The *\*Buddhabhūmisūtraśāstra*, T26, 296a-298b. According to Xuanzang's translation of the *\*Buddhabhūmisūtraśāstra*, the author is Bandhuprabha, while according to the Sanskrit text entitled *\*Buddhabhūmivākyāna*, it is composed by Śīlabhadra. See John Makransky (1997), 452.

<sup>66</sup> T35, 686b.

<sup>67</sup> Paramārtha's translation of the MS, T31, 122a, Xuanzang's translation, T31, 141c.

<sup>68</sup> T26, 296c.

<sup>69</sup> These discussions are found at T31, 347a-348a, 409b-411b. The *\*Buddhabhūmisūtra*, T16, 720c.

<sup>70</sup> T26, 296b.

<sup>71</sup> T35, 420a.

<sup>72</sup> The ten Buddha bodies and the ten Buddhas are mentioned in Buddhabhadra's translation of the *\*Avatamsaka* at T9, 565b-c, T9, 634c and Śikṣānanda's translation at T10, 282a, T10, 200a respectively. The ten Buddha bodies are also mentioned in the *\*Daśabhūmikasūtra* (T10, 522a) and the ten Buddhas in the *\*Buddhabhūmisāstra* (T26, 327c).

<sup>73</sup> T10, 648a.

<sup>74</sup> The ten Buddhas are mentioned in Buddhabhadra's translation, T9, 663b, 634c, Śikṣānanda's translation, T10, 282a, 308a. The *\*Buddhabhūmisūtraśāstra* (T26, 327c) also mentions the ten Buddhas with similar names. The *Fajijing* (《法集經》) mentions ten Buddhas, but their names are different: the Buddha of habitual force, the Buddha of reward of action, the Buddha of concentration, the Buddha of vow, the Buddha of mind, the Buddha of truth, the Buddha of equality, the Buddha of manifestation, the Buddha of offering and the Buddha of image.

<sup>75</sup> The founding of the Huayan School is traditionally attributed to a series of five "patriarchs" who were instrumental in developing the school's doctrines. They are: Dushun (杜順 557~640), the first patriarch, Zhiyan (智儼 602~668), the second, Fazang (法藏 643~712), the third, Chengguan (澄觀 738~839), the fourth, and Zongmi (宗密 780~841), the fifth. These men each played a significant and distinct role in the development of the philosophy of the school. Dushun is known to have been responsible for the establishment of Huayan studies as a distinct field; Zhiyan is considered to have established the basic doctrines of the sect; Fazang is considered to have rationalized the doctrine for greater acceptance by society; Chengguan and Zongmi are understood to have further developed and transformed the teachings. The School suffered severely during the purge of 841-5 CE, and never regained its former strength and vitality despite the appearance of several eminent Huayan scholars in the Sung dynasty. Cited from the web-based *Dictionary of East Asian Buddhist Terms*, edited by Charles Muller.

<sup>76</sup> T35, 424a-b and T45, 599c-600a.

<sup>77</sup> T35, 904b.

<sup>78</sup> T9, 429b.

<sup>79</sup> T9, 565b-c. (1) 是菩薩知眾生身，知國土身，知業報身，知聲聞身，知辟支佛身，知菩薩身，知如來身，知智身，知法身，知虛空身。(2) 菩薩身，願身，化身，住持身，相好莊嚴身，勢力身，如意身，福德身，智身，法身。The ten kinds of bodies of the Tathāgata are also found in the \**Daśabhūmikasūtra*, T10, 522a.

<sup>80</sup> T45, 560a.

<sup>81</sup> T10, 354c.

<sup>82</sup> T36, 120c-121a.

<sup>83</sup> T36, 120a and 705a. According to Chengguan, each body has a special mark or attribute (T36, 607a). The body of power has the quality of entering everywhere and benefiting all. The body of transformation has the quality of manifesting itself to all without thinking. The body of enlightenment has the quality of manifesting itself equally in accordance with needs. The body of wisdom has the quality of non-attachment and non-obstacle. The body of dharma has the quality of pervading the ten directions. The body of merit and virtues has the quality of benefiting sentient beings and adorning the Buddha lands. The body endowed with excellent physical attributes has the quality of non-birth and potential benefit. The body of vow has the quality of adornment and vow fulfilled. The body of preservation of the true teaching has the quality of infinite future. The body of mind has the quality of abiding.

<sup>84</sup> T35, 505c.

<sup>85</sup> T45, 362b-c.

<sup>86</sup> T36, 143b. Chengguan is not consistent in his argument. In another place of the same commentary (T36, 31a) he says that the body of enlightenment, the body of vow, the body of transformation, the body of preservation of the true teaching and the body of mind comprise the *nirmāṇakāya*. The body of power, the body of merit and virtues, and the body endowed with excellent qualities can be either the *saṃbhogakāya* or the *nirmāṇakāya*. The body of Dharma is the *dharmakāya* and the body of wisdom can be the three bodies.

<sup>87</sup> D. T. Suzuki (1930), chapter on the triple body of the Buddha, 308-338.

<sup>88</sup> D. T. Suzuki (1930), 319.

<sup>89</sup> T16, 473a-b. 阿難，何者是菩提行處？三種道理，顯現三身，一者甚深道理，二者廣大道理，三者萬德道理。The translation is mine.

<sup>90</sup> The Chinese term Weide (威德) literally means power and virtue. The power is for crushing evil and the virtue is for increasing good.

<sup>91</sup> T31, 606a-b.

<sup>92</sup> H. Nakamura (1996), 229-230. The other *sūtras* in the first periods are the \**Tathāgatagarbhasūtra*, the *Buzengbujianjing*, the \**Srīmālādevīsīṃhanādasūtra*, the Mahāyāna *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*, etc. which are considered commentaries on the \**Anuttarāśrayasūtra* by some Japanese scholars. Jikido Takasaki holds the opinion that the \**Anuttarāśrayasūtra* is a composition based upon the \**Ratnagotravibhāga*, with its contents reshaped into the style of a *sūtra* while keeping the stress on the *bodhi* aspects which form the ultimate basis. See Jikido Takasaki (1960), 747.

<sup>93</sup> Cited from Nakamura (1996), 230, footnote 12 and 14. Hakuju Ui discusses the composition of the \**Anuttarāśrayasūtra* in his *Bukkyo Kyoten-shi* (History of Buddhist Scriptures), 1957, 143. D. Tokiwa discusses the *sūtra* in the *Bussho Kaisetsu Daijiten*, vol. X, 409.

<sup>94</sup> Jikido Takasaki (1960), 743.

<sup>95</sup> The Sanskrit terms are given in Takasaki's articles on the \**Anuttarāśrayasūtra*. See Jikido Takasaki (1960) 747.

<sup>96</sup> See John Makransky (1997), 54.

<sup>97</sup> Paul Griffiths, Hakamaya Noriaki, John P. Keenan, and Paul L. Swanson (1989), 170.

<sup>98</sup> T16, 723b. 自性法受用，變化差別轉，如是淨法界，諸佛之所說。The translation is mine.

<sup>99</sup> T26, 325c.

<sup>100</sup> In her dissertation, Teresina Rowell (1935, pp.414-431) discusses many factors for the rise of the belief in the simultaneous existence of many Buddhas. She has given six reasons: (1) it is a natural corollary of the enlarging cosmology. For just as Śākyamuni is the Buddha in this *Sahā* world so there are other Buddhas in other universes. (2) As there are many contemporaneous bodhisattvas practising, so there are many Buddhas. (3) The cakravartin ideal also serves as a model for there are many Wheel-turning monarchs existing so there are many Buddhas existing simultaneously. (4) In Hinduism, there are various chief gods who are believed to preside over various worlds or heavens so there was probably a necessity for Buddhists to produce similar heavens for Buddhas. (5) The rise of devotion (*bhakti*) in Buddhism also explains the ascendance of this belief that the Buddha or any Buddha must be somewhere in the universe to bring his followers to rebirth in his heaven. (6) The sixteen arhats who had been entrusted the *Saddharma* by the Buddha stayed out of *nirvāṇa* in different parts of the world in order to maintain and teach the Dharma until it becomes extinct. This reflects a significant stage in the evolution of local division of responsibility among those mandated to preach the Dharma, which points to the later assignment of future Buddhas to various areas of the universe destined to be their Buddha lands.

<sup>101</sup> Jan Nattier (2000), 89-90.

<sup>102</sup> The idea is found in early Buddhism that there can never be two Buddhas in one world simultaneously at a time.

<sup>103</sup> All the quotations are from the so called larger *Sukhāvatīvyūhasūtra* (T12, 301a-302b) translated by Zhiqian. These quotations are from the twenty-four vows which are supposed to be earlier than the forty-eighty vows. The number is the number of the vow in the *sūtra*.

<sup>104</sup> T8, 458a. The *sūtra* also mentions that bodhisattvas, who have no doubts after listening to the \**Prajñāpāramitāsūtra* and establish firm faith in the Buddha's words, will be born in the land of Akṣobhya. The *Daoxingbanruojing* was translated in 179 CE, and the *Akṣobhyavyūha*, in 186 CE or before.

<sup>105</sup> Some scholars like Paul Harrison think that the *Sukhāvatīvyūha* which is listed under the translations of Lokakṣema was probably translated by Dharmarakṣa, whose activity of translation (266-313 CE) in China was later than Lokakṣema by half to one century. If this is true, it also supports the late origin of Amitābha. Cited from Paul Harrison's public lectures at SOAS, October to December 1999.

<sup>106</sup> Jan Nattier (2000), 101-102.

<sup>107</sup> Yinshun (1994), 475-477.

<sup>108</sup> T11, 753c. 成無上正真道最正覺，得薩芸若慧時，是三千大千世界，諸妊身女人皆安隱產。T11, 756a. 其佛刹女人德，欲比玉女寶者，玉女寶不及其佛刹女人，百倍、千倍、萬倍、億倍、巨億萬倍不與等。

<sup>109</sup> Nāṇamoli (1995), 714.

<sup>110</sup> T11, 752b.

<sup>111</sup> T11, 755b.

<sup>112</sup> T11, 762c.

<sup>113</sup> See Fujita Kotatsu's article, 'The Origin of the Pure Land'. *The Eastern Buddhist*, Vol.29, No.1, 1996, pp.33-51.

<sup>114</sup> T12, 344c-345b.

<sup>115</sup> T2, 788c-789a.

<sup>116</sup> T14, 420a.

<sup>117</sup> T9, 405a-418a.

<sup>118</sup> T9, 412a.

<sup>119</sup> T9, 605c.

<sup>120</sup> T9, 763c. The translation is mine. The *sūtra* states that Mahāmāyā was the mother of Vairocana throughout his bodhisattva career because of the following vow "I will be his mother until his enlightenment." This vow was made in the distant past when Vairocana was a Wheel-turning Monarch. The story goes thus: in the north of his capital there was a temple in which resided a bodhisattva who was about to attain enlightenment when Māra with his army came to destroy him. The Wheel-turning Monarch who had the mastery of magical power of a bodhisattva came and defeated Māra. The bodhisattva attained enlightenment. Upon seeing this, the guardian god of the temple, who became Mahāmāyā in the last life of Vairocana, thus made the above vow.

<sup>121</sup> T24, 997c.

<sup>122</sup> T8, 828a. 三賢十聖住果報，唯佛一人居淨土。The translation is mine.

<sup>123</sup> T10, 614b.

<sup>124</sup> Buddhahadra's translation, chapter two, the Vairocana Buddha. T9, 405a-418a.

<sup>125</sup> T10, 968b.

<sup>126</sup> T31, 58b.

<sup>127</sup> T45, 370b.

<sup>128</sup> É. Lamotte (1976), 275-284.

<sup>129</sup> T45, 369b.

<sup>130</sup> T45, 370b.

<sup>131</sup> T45, 372a.

<sup>132</sup> T31, 719c. 復有清淨世界，非苦諦攝，非業煩惱力所生故，非業煩惱增上所起故，然由大願清淨善根增上所引。此所生處不可思議，唯佛所覺，尙非得靜慮者靜慮境界，況尋思者。The translation is mine.

<sup>133</sup> T24, 997c.

<sup>134</sup> T26, 194a-c.

<sup>135</sup> T30, 295a.

<sup>136</sup> T31, 436a.

<sup>137</sup> T45, 372a. The physical world of this Pure Land is described as endowed with various excellences (*sampad*) in both the \**Avataṃsaka*, and the \**Buddhabhūmisūtra*. The *Mahāyānasamgraha* of Asaṅga translated by Xuanzang summarizes it into eighteen excellences of: (1) colour (*varṇa*), (2) shape (*saṃsthāna*), (3) dimension (*pramāṇa*), (4) realm (*deśa*), (5) cause (*hetu*), (6) fruit (*phala*), (7) sovereign (*adhipati*), (8) assistance (*pakṣa*), (9) entourage (*parivāra*), (10) support (*adhiṣṭhāna*), (11) activity (*karman*), (12) beneficence (*upakāra*), (13) fearlessness (*nirbhaya*), (14) beauty (*āspada*), (15) path (*mārga*), (16) vehicle (*yāna*), (17) door (*mukha*), and (18) base (*ādhāra*). (T31, 151a.) These eighteen excellences are also found in the



commentaries of the *Mahāyānasamgraha* written by both Vasubandhu and Asvabhāva and both are translated by Xuanzang. (T31, 376c, 445a) However, it is not found in the *Mahāyānasamgraha* translated by both Buddhaśanti and Paramārtha dated earlier than Xuanzang, and it is also not found in Vasubandhu's commentary translated by Paramārtha. The Sanskrit *Mahāyānasamgraha* translated by Xuanzang was probably a revised version with some additions.

<sup>138</sup> Takeuchi Shiyokou ('Buddhakan no hensen'. In Akira Hirakawa, ed., *Daijō Bukkyō*, Vol. I, Tokyo: Shunjusha. 1983), 168-169.

<sup>139</sup> Mochizuki Shinkō thinks that according to master Tanluan (曇鸞, 488-554) Amitābha was indeed a sambhogkāya. However, Tanluan never expressed this idea in his writings. See David Chappell ('Chinese Buddhist Interpretations of the Pure Lands', in Michael Saso and David W. Chappell ed., *Buddhist and Taoist Studies I*, Hawaii: The University Press of Hawaii, 1977), 36.

<sup>140</sup> 安樂集

<sup>141</sup> T47, 5c. 《安樂集》：現在彌陀是報佛，極樂寶莊嚴國是報土。The translation is mine.

<sup>142</sup> T47, 5c-6a. 問曰：“如來報身常住，雲何《觀音授記經》雲‘阿彌陀佛入涅槃後，觀世音菩薩次補佛處’也？”答曰：“此是報身，示現隱沒相，非滅度也。彼經雲，阿彌陀佛入涅槃後，復有深厚善根衆生還見如故，即其證也。” The translation is mine.

<sup>143</sup> David Chappell, *op. cit.*, 37.

<sup>144</sup> T47, 5c14. 然古舊相傳，皆云阿彌陀佛是化身，土亦是化土。The translation is mine.

<sup>145</sup> David Chappell (1977) 26-36.

<sup>146</sup> 依, āśraya.

<sup>147</sup> 心, āśaya.

<sup>148</sup> 自性, svabhāva.

<sup>149</sup> T31, 606c, line 12-21. The translation is mine.

<sup>150</sup> T31, 129c. 149a.

<sup>151</sup> The Chinese translations of T12, No.361 and No.362 list twenty-four vows, T12, No.363 lists thirty-six, while T12, No.360, No.364, the Sanskrit as well as the Tibetan versions describe forty-eight. However, the Chinese Buddhists in general believe in the forty-eight vows in their daily practice.

<sup>152</sup> According to the *Vibhāṣā*, there are two Śākyamuni Buddhas. The present Śākyamuni Buddha, as a bodhisattva eons ago, made his vows to become a Buddha exactly the same as the ancient Śākyamuni Buddha who became a Buddha when the life-span of people was around a hundred years. See T27, 891b-892a.

<sup>153</sup> T25, 313b. 釋迦文佛本誓：“我出惡世欲以道法度脫衆生，不爲富貴世樂故出。”

<sup>154</sup> T9, 411c. 所謂有佛興世，色身示現，遍滿法界，或有短壽，或無量劫。The translation is mine.

<sup>155</sup> T25, 312a-b. 以是故知，諸佛壽命實皆無量，爲度人故，現有長短。The translation is mine.

<sup>156</sup> T14, 554a. 阿難，諸佛色身、威相、種性、戒、定、智慧、解脫、解脫知見、力、無所畏、不共之法、大慈、大悲、威儀所行、及其壽命、說法教化、成就衆生淨佛國土，具諸佛法，悉皆同等，是故名爲三藐三佛陀，名爲多陀阿伽度，名

爲佛陀。 The translation is adapted from Thurman, Robert A. F. (1976),

<sup>157</sup> ‘Alougen’ is an early translation of the name Avalokiteśvara. See William Edward Soothill, Lewis Hodous and Rev. Shik Sheng-kang, (1989), 399a.

<sup>158</sup> T12, 291a, line 3 – 7. The translation is mine. The passages quoted in T12, No.361 and T12, No.362 are the same but T12, No.364 is different. “After the *parinirvāṇa* of Amitābha, bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara will attain Buddhahood and take over the role of teaching to liberate humans as well as gods of the ten directions of the world by establishing them all in *nirvāṇa*.” T12, 336b line 18-21. The \**Karuṇapūṇḍarikasūtra* also mentions the same idea of the *parinirvāṇa* of Amitābha Buddha, T3, 186a.

<sup>159</sup> T31, 606a-c.

<sup>160</sup> T31, 606b, line 9-12. The translation is mine.

<sup>161</sup> T31, 372b, line 28 to 372c, line 6. The translation is mine. There are three Chinese translations of the *Mahāyānasamgrahabhāṣya* of Vasubandhu: (1) T31, No.1595 translated by Paramārtha in 563 CE; (2) T31, No.1596 translated by Dharmagupta in 590-616 CE, and (3) T31, No.1597 translated by Xuanzang in 647-649 CE. The English translation is adopted from Paul Griffiths, and Noriaki Hakamaya, (1989, 113-114) with a few changes.

<sup>162</sup> T12, 307a-b. The translation is mine. This is a long passage describing how after Amitābha proclaimed the *sūtra*, the listeners attained various stages of attainments.

## Conclusion

### The Five Basic Stages in the Development of the Concept of the Buddha

As we have seen, the development of the concept of the Buddha is a complex issue. It has involved many key aspects of Buddhist thought such as the goal of Buddhist practice, the bodhisattva ideal and the notion of *nirvāṇa*. This development can be described as a process of evolution from the Buddha being conceived of as a human teacher in early Buddhism to a philosophical and abstract concept with the Mahāyāna. As early as the times of the early Indian Buddhist schools, attempts were made to understand or interpret what or who was the Buddha. The interpretations of these early schools were closely connected with the historical Buddha since the life of Śākyamuni had a strong influence upon them. It is the early Mahāyānists who thoroughly interpreted the notion of the Buddha in an ontological way. The *dharmakāya* was rendered as an impersonal principle supporting all phenomena in which the historical Buddha played an insignificant role. It was on this basis that the *trikāya* theory was formulated through the analysis and synthesis of the doctrinal developments in the early and middle Mahāyāna *sūtras*. Five basic stages in the development of the concept of the Buddha can be seen.

The first stage is the Buddha as a human teacher and guide in early Buddhism although many supernatural qualities had been attributed to him, for example the thirty-two marks of a great man. In the earliest Buddhist literature, namely the *Nikāyas* and the *Āgamas*, two identities of the Buddha are clearly distinguishable: the human teacher and the superhuman being. As discussed in the first chapter, the superhuman aspect of the Buddha falls into two categories: the miracles performed by Gautama Buddha and the miracles that occurred naturally. The latter category does not affect the personality of the Buddha. The first, as analysed, is included in the six modes of higher knowledge that are attainable by a human. Although the story of the

Buddha in the early *sūtras* is deeply embedded in legends and mythology, the human identity is vividly seen in his illness and old age as well as in the troubles of his life from within and outside the community of monks.

In the second stage of the early Indian Buddhist schools there emerged two different interpretations of the notion of the Buddha on the basis of the two identities of the Buddha present in early Buddhism. The Sarvāstivādins established the two-body theory: the *dharmakāya* and the *rūpakāya* based on the teachings of the *Āgamas*. They insisted that the *dharmakāya* corresponded to the real Buddha to be taken refuge in. It was thus not the impure *rūpakāya* that was to form the object of refuge, although they essentially advocated the human version of the Buddha. The Sarvāstivādins believed that what made Gautama a Buddha was his attainment of *bodhi*, which was comprised of the pure mental qualities. According to the *\*Mahāvibhāṣā* these pure mental qualities consisted of the eighteen *dharmas* exclusive to the Buddha, which are named collectively as *dharmakāya* as shown in the second chapter. This interpretation of the concept of the Buddha is rational and analytical since there is nothing innovative about it. It represents only a synthetic summary of what is taught in early Buddhism. On the other hand, the Mahāsāṃghikas interpreted the Buddha as a transcendental being on the basis of the Buddha's superhuman qualities revealed in the same *Āgamas*. After all, it is well known that they took whatever was said by the Buddha as an enunciation of Dharma. This interpretation added new dimensions to the notion of the Buddha in two ways. Firstly, the real Buddha was perceived as exalted above mankind, omniscient and almighty. Secondly, the appearance of the Buddha on earth, including his daily activities, is considered as a display for the sake of liberating sentient beings. The Buddha was not therefore subject to the laws of the human world.

The third stage is the ontological interpretation of the concept of the Buddha by the early Mahāyānists on the basis of Mahāsāṃghika Buddhology. The early Mahāyānists reinterpreted the notion of the Buddha as having the nature of the *tathatā*,

which they introduced. According to them *tathatā*, which is the true nature of all things both transcendental and worldly, is the *dharmakāya*, for both possess the same characteristics. (1) They are intrinsically pure and eternal and (2) they are one and the same in all Buddhas of the past, present and future. Since *tathatā* inheres in all objects and pervades the entire universe, the *dharmakāya* becomes a cosmic body as well as the principle supporting all phenomena. It is for this reason that the *dharmakāya* is considered as the real Buddha. This understanding of the notion of the Buddha is very different from that of the early Indian Buddhist schools. The Mahāyānists fully concentrated on the abstract notion of the Buddha rather than that of the historical Buddha. This provides the foundation for the Mahāyānist doctrine of the concept of the Buddha.

The fourth stage is the identification of the *dharmakāya* with many new concepts such as *tathāgatagarbha* and *mahāparinirvāṇa*, which were introduced by the Mahāyānists. These new concepts added new dimensions to the notion of the Buddha and thus the dimensions and connotations of the concept became expanded. According to the \**Mahāvaiṣṭyātathāgatagarbhasūtra*, all sentient beings possess Buddha nature (*tathāgatagarbha*), while it is covered with defilements. When the defilements are eliminated, pure *dharmakāya* becomes revealed. The *tathāgatagarbha* is named *buddhadhātu* at the level of sentient beings, and *dharmakāya* at the level of Buddhahood. Buddhas are not different from sentient beings in the ultimate sense since they all possess the same *tathatā*, but from the perspective of conventional truth they are different, as Buddhas do not have *kleśas*. According to the Mahāyāna *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*, however, the *mahāparinirvāṇa* of the Buddha is different from the liberation of the *śrāvakas* and *pratyekabuddhas* in that it has four attributes: eternity, happiness, self and purity. The attribute of eternity is the crux of the concept of *mahāparinirvāṇa*, since the other three attributes are established on its basis as discussed in the fourth chapter. Therefore, the Buddha's abiding in *mahāparinirvāṇa* does not imply that he is gone forever, but that he eternally lives in intrinsic

quiescence. Thus, in his *\*Buddhagotraśāstra*, Vasubandhu asserts that terms such as Tathāgata, *dharmakāya*, *paramārtha*, and *nirvāṇa* are all congruent since they ontologically have *tathatā* as their essence. They are given different names because each of them denotes a specific aspect of Buddhahood. Thus, the notion of the Buddha in the Mahāyāna is entirely different from that of early Buddhism. Ontologically it is the ultimate reality and soteriologically it is the transcendent being who establishes sentient beings in enlightenment.

The fifth stage is the formulation of the *trikāya* theory, being the climax in the progressive development of the concept of the Buddha. The *trikāya* theory is most probably a result of two parallel lines of Mahāyāna development: statements developed in the *sūtras*, and the debates and controversies focused on the status of the Buddha. These two lines of thought interacted and influenced each other. First, theories concerning the Buddha found in Mahāyāna *sūtras* developed rapidly from the time of the *\*Prajñāpāramitā* to the *\*Avataṃsaka*. More and more transcendental qualities such as magical light and soteriological power were attributed to the Buddha. These qualities were expanded and strengthened as Mahāyānist theories developed. The *\*Avataṃsaka* compilation represents perhaps the last stage before the formulation of the *trikāya* theory by providing the doctrinal foundation for the advent of such a theory. Second, the debates on the transcendental qualities of the Buddha in early Indian Buddhist schools identified the problem of the short lifespan of Buddha Śākyamuni in Mahāyāna *sūtras*. It was an important issue since many Mahāyāna *sūtras* devoted a special chapter to it, as shown in the fifth chapter. This served as significant impetus for the further development of the concept of the Buddha. One of the reasons Yogācāra masters such as Asaṅga and Vasubandhu established the *trikāya* theory rooted in the doctrines of the Mahāyāna *sūtras*, was thus to solve the complex problem concerning the ontological status of the Buddha.

## Appendix I

\*Lokānuvartanasūtra 《佛說內藏百寶經》 No. 807 (T17, pp.751b12-753c23)<sup>1</sup>

Translated by Lokakṣema in Han dynasty 25-220 CE.

佛在羅閱祇耆闍崛山中，時有萬二千比丘僧，菩薩七萬二千人共坐，文殊師利菩薩從坐起，前白佛：“今菩薩大會欲從佛聞漚和拘舍羅所入事，菩薩何因緣分別知內外事？”佛語文殊師利菩薩：“聽我所說，隨世間習俗而入教，佛智不可量，經法不計，諸阿羅漢、辟支佛所不能知，何況世間人當所聞知？世間人所行皆著，佛所行無所著，獨佛佛能相知。如佛經法所言，如佛身內外心智慧，佛何緣現世間，何因當別知？”

The Buddha was staying at the Vulture Peak Mountain near Rājagṛha. At that time, there were twelve thousand bhikṣu Saṅgha and seventy two thousand bodhisattvas sitting together. Mañjuśrī bodhisattva rose from his seat and came forward and said to the Buddha: “Now, the bodhisattvas in the assembly wish to hear from the Buddha about the things regarding the *upāyakauśalya*. By what causes does the bodhisattva know the Buddha Dharma and other things?”<sup>2</sup> The Buddha told Mañjuśrī bodhisattva: “Listen to what I say, it is in conformity with the ways of the world that (I) teach. The wisdom of the Buddha cannot be measured and the teachings of the Buddha are uncountable. The *arhats* and the *pratyekabuddhas* cannot know, how much less so the worldly people. The worldly people act out of attachment, but the Buddha acts without attachment. It is only the Buddhas who know the Buddhas. Just as the *sūtras* say about the mind, the wisdom and also the body of the Buddha. What causes the Buddha to appear in the world? By what causes is it known?”

01. 雖在世間皆不著，悉為世間作明，身所行、口所言、心所念，隨世間習俗而入，行內事行。

Although the Buddha abides in the world but he does not attach to it, he is a light to the world. All his bodily actions, words of the mouth and thoughts of the mind are in conformity with the ways of the world. Thus he cultivated his mind (literally practice internally).

02. 諸佛法所行無能過者，佛所行無有能逮者，隨世間習俗而入，無有能知者。

No one can surpass the teachings of the Buddhas and no one can achieve the works of the Buddha. It is in conformity with the ways of the world, but there are none who know.

03. 佛用哀十方人故悉現明，隨世間所喜，為說(751c)經法。

The Buddha, out of compassion for the people of the ten directions, illuminates (the world) by preaching the Dharma in accordance with the likes (and dislikes) of the world.

04. 菩薩不從父母遘精而生，其身化作，譬如幻，示現父母，隨世間習俗而入，

示現如是。

The Bodhisattva was not born from the sexual union of father and mother. His body is magically produced, like illusion. He makes a show of having father and mother. It is in conformity with the ways of the world that he makes such a show.<sup>3</sup>

05. 佛光焰不可計，照明十方，隨世間習俗而入，示現七尺光明。

The Buddha has an immeasurable light which illuminates the ten cardinal directions. It is in conformity with the ways of the world that he makes a show of having a light of seven *chi* only.<sup>4</sup>

06. 佛未嘗持足踏地，文相反現地，隨世間習俗而入，示現如是。

The Buddha has never touched the ground with his feet, but the marks imprint on the ground. It is in conformity with the ways of the world that he makes such a show.

07. 佛從數千萬億阿僧祇劫以來，成就般若波羅蜜，隨世間習俗而入，示現小兒。

Since many thousand myriad *koṭis* of *asaṃkhyeyakalpas* ago the Buddha has accomplished *prajñāpāramitā*. It is in conformity with the ways of the world that he made a show of (being) a small boy.

08. 佛照明十方人於姪瞋中，隨世間習俗而入，亦復現妻子。

The Buddha illuminates men of the ten directions in darkness. It is in conformity with the ways of the world that he makes a show of having a wife and a child.

09. 菩薩生墮地時自說言，‘天上天下，無過我者，我當過度十方人’，隨世間習俗而入。

When the bodhisattva was born and walked on the ground he uttered the words: “In the whole world no-one surpasses me! I shall deliver men of the ten directions!”<sup>5</sup> It is in conformity with the ways of the world that he makes such a show.

10. 亦復問，太子闍浮提坐樹下時，從是起去，勤苦六年，隨世間習俗而入，示現人勤苦如是。

Some ask that since the prince sat at the foot of a tree in Jambudvīpa, there had been six years of suffering with endeavour. It is in conformity with the ways of the world that he makes a show of suffering.<sup>6</sup>

11. 佛道欲成時，於樹下獨坐，隨世間習俗而入，放光使魔知之。

The Buddha sat alone at the foot of the tree when he is about to attain enlightenment. It is in conformity with the ways of the world that he emits rays of light to inform Māra of his state.

12. 佛智慧以成，悉等無有能過者，隨世間習俗而入，得佛坐安隱，示現世間如是。



The Buddha accomplished wisdom which is equal to (all Buddhas) and there are none who can surpass it. It is in conformity with the ways of the world that he makes a show of having obtained Buddhahood and sits in peaceful seclusion.

13. 雖得佛，用哀十方人故，當爲說經度脫之，釋梵從佛求哀，爲人故使佛說經，隨世間習俗而入，示現如是。

(The purpose of) attaining Buddhahood is to preach the Dharma in order to save the people of the ten directions out of compassion. But the Brahmā Sahampati pleads the Buddha to deliver the Dharma to people. It is in conformity with the ways of the world that he makes such a show.

14. 佛智慧無有能增減者，隨世間習俗而入，示現智慧多少如是。

There is nothing which can either increase or decrease the wisdom of the Buddha. It is in conformity with the ways of the world that he makes a show of having more or less wisdom.

15. 佛亦無所從來，去亦無所至，住如本無，隨世間習俗而入，呼佛爲出入，示現如是。

The Buddha abides in *tathatā* and emptiness so he does not come and does not go. It is in conformity with the ways of the world to say that the Buddha appears (in the world) and enters into (*parinirvāṇa*).<sup>7</sup> This is just a show.

16. 佛無入所適住，譬如空亦無所適住，隨世間習俗而入，呼佛爲住，示現如是。

The Buddha abides nowhere just as the empty space that abides nowhere. It is in conformity with the ways of the world to say that the Buddha lives. It is only a show.

17. 佛足譬如蓮花，不受塵垢，佛洗足，隨世間習俗而入，示現(752a)如是。

The Buddha's feet, like lotus flowers, do not get dirty, but the Buddha washes his feet. It is in conformity with the ways of the world that he makes such a show.

18. 佛身如金，不受塵垢，佛現入浴，隨世間習俗而入，示現如是。

The Buddha's body, like gold, does not get dirty, but the Buddha makes a show of taking a bath. It is in conformity with the ways of the world that he makes such a show.

19. 佛口中本淨潔，譬如鬱金之香，佛反以楊枝漱口，隨世間習俗而入，示現如是。

The Buddha's mouth is fundamentally clean, with a fragrance like that of *kuṅkuma*. Nevertheless the Buddha cleans his mouth with poplar twigs. It is in conformity with the ways of the world that he makes such a show.

20. 佛未嘗有飢時，用哀十方人故，爲現飢，隨世間習俗而入，示現如是。

The Buddha has never been hungry. Because of compassion for men of the ten directions (to gain merit) he manifests hunger to them. It is in conformity with the ways of the world that he makes such a show.

21. 佛身如金剛，淨潔無瑕穢、無清便，現人大小清便，隨世間習俗而入，示現如是。

The body of the Buddha, like diamond, is pure without blemish and human waste, but he makes a show to men of having human waste. It is in conformity with the ways of the world that he makes such a show.

22. 佛身無有衰老時，但有眾德，而現身衰老，隨世間習俗而入，示現如是。

The Buddha's body never grows decrepit with age. He is only endowed with all virtues, yet he makes a show of having a body which grows decrepit with age. It is in conformity with the ways of the world that he makes such a show.

23. 佛身未嘗有病，而現病，呼醫服藥，與藥者得福無量，隨世間習俗而入，示現如是。

The Buddha's body has never suffered illness, yet he manifests illness, summons doctors and takes medicine. The giver of the medicine obtains immeasurable blessings. It is in conformity with the ways of the world that he makes such a show.

24. 佛力不可當，持一指動十方佛刹，現人羸瘦疲極，隨世間習俗而入，示現如是。

The strength of the Buddha cannot be resisted and he can shake the Buddha-lands of the ten directions with one finger, but he makes a show to men of being tired and decrepit. It is in conformity with the ways of the world that he makes such a show.

25. 佛一念頃，能飛至無央數佛刹，而現疲極，隨世間習俗而入，示現如是。

The Buddha can fly to numerous Buddha-lands within one thought moment, but he makes a show of tiredness. It is in conformity with the ways of the world that he makes such a show.

26. 佛身如幻，以經法名為身，現人惡露身，隨世間習俗而入，示現如是。

The body of the Buddha is like an illusion, the Dharma is his body,<sup>8</sup> but he makes a show to men of having an imperfect human body.<sup>9</sup> It is in conformity with the ways of the world that he makes such a show.

27. 佛本無所有，隨世間所喜樂現所有，隨世間習俗而入，示現如是。

The Buddha in reality is empty, but he makes a show of appearance in accordance with the likes (and the dislikes) of the world. It is in conformity with the ways of the world that he makes such a show.

28. 佛身力不可計，終無坐起、行步、臥、出，現人坐起、行步、臥、出，隨世間習俗而入，示現如是。

The physical strength of the Buddha is immeasurable and in fact, there is no sitting up, walking, lying down or going out. But he makes a show to men of sitting up, walking, lying down or going out. It is in conformity with the ways of the world that he makes such a show.

29. 佛身終不以寒溫動，隨得寒溫陰涼，隨世間習俗而入，示現如是。

The body of the Buddha is in fact never affected by cold or heat, (but he makes a show of) adjusting to the cold or heat. It is in conformity with the ways of the world that he makes a show.

30. 佛如空，現人常著衣，無有解時，譬如梵天人常著衣，隨世間習俗而入，示現如是。

The Buddha is like empty space. He makes a show to others of always wearing clothes without ever taking them off, just as the men of the Brahma-heaven(s) always wear clothes. It is in conformity with the ways of the world that he makes such a show.

31. 佛頭未嘗墮髮，法但示人，亦無有見持剃刀去者，隨世間習俗而入，示現如是。

The Buddha's head has never had its hair shaved off. He simply shows it to others, yet nobody sees it being removed with a razor. It is in conformity with the ways of the world that he makes such a show. (752b)

32. 佛無坐時，現人勤苦，於石上坐，隨世間習俗而入，示現如是。

The Buddha never rests (lit. sits), but he makes a show to men of sitting on a stone because of tiredness. It is in conformity with the ways of the world that he makes such a show.

33. 佛咽喉有滋味之相，未嘗有飢時，用哀十方人故，有人施與，羸惡悉為受，隨世間習俗而入，示現如是。

The Buddha has a mark of deliciousness in his throat so he is never hungry. But out of compassion for the people of the ten directions, he accepts even the coarse food offered by people. It is in conformity with the ways of the world that he makes such a show

34. 佛功德之福不可盡，亦無有能過者，佛入城分衛，得空鉢出，隨世間習俗而入，示現如是。

The blessings of the Buddha's merits are inexhaustible, and no one can surpass them. The Buddha enters the city for *piṇḍapāta*, and leaves with an empty bowl (*pātra*). It is in conformity with the ways of the world that he makes such a show.<sup>10</sup>

35. 佛功德福不可盡，欲得天上天下名好衣悉可得，故著補納之衣，隨世間習俗而入，示現如是。

The blessings of the Buddha's merits are inexhaustible, if he wishes he can get all the good clothes in the world and in the heaven, but he purposely wears patched cloth. It is in conformity with the ways of the world that he makes such a show.

36. 佛欲得舍宅、床、臥具、天上天下珍寶、殿舍，悉可得，現世間人暴露精思，草蓐上坐，隨世間習俗而入，示現如是。

The Buddha can get a house, a bed, treasure from Earth and Heaven and palace if he so wishes, but he makes a show of meditation by sitting on grass in the open to the worldly people. It is in conformity with the ways of the world that he makes such a show.

37. 佛持威神，吹海水悉令枯竭，見天雨，持傘蓋，隨世間習俗而入，示現如是。

The Buddha has the divine power to dry up the water in the sea by blowing, (but he makes a show of) holding an umbrella when it rains. It is in conformity with the ways of the world that he makes such a show.

38. 佛一念頃，能使數千萬億魔不知佛處，現人爲魔所嬈，隨世間習俗而入，示現如是。

The Buddha can disappear within a thought moment so that many thousands myriad of Māras will not know where he has gone, but he makes a show to men of being tempted by Māra's daughters.<sup>11</sup> It is in conformity with the ways of the world that he makes such a show.

39. 佛悉曉了，十方不可計諸佛所有經法，示現人反覆問，隨世間習俗而入，示現如是。

The Buddha knows all the *dharmas* of the countless Buddhas of the ten directions, but he makes a show to men of inquiring again and again. It is in conformity with the ways of the world that he makes such a show.<sup>12</sup>

40. 佛用哀十方故，出現世間，欲教度，復現人，供養得福無量，隨世間習俗而入，示現如是。

The Buddha, out of compassion for men of the ten directions, appears in the world to teach and to save (people). He also makes a show to men that one will get immeasurable merits by making offerings (to a Buddha). It is in conformity with the ways of the world that he makes such a show.

41. 佛無本，隨世間所喜色現身，如是本一，隨世間習俗而入，示現如是。

The Buddha fundamentally is empty, but he makes a show of having such a body in accordance with the colour (lit. *rūpa*) that the world likes. It is in conformity with the

ways of the world that he makes such a show.

42. 合聚十方雷電之聲，共作一聲，不能動佛一毛，現入禪三昧，當於無聲處，隨世間習俗而入，示現如是。

The sound of the thunderbolts of the ten directions in combination cannot move even one hair of the Buddha, but he makes a show of being in a quiet place in order to enter *samādhi*. It is in conformity with the ways of the world that he makes such a show.

43. 諸經法本無名，佛示人諸經法無央數，隨世間習俗而入，示現如是。

The *dharmas* have the designation 'empty', but the Buddha makes a show to men of numerous *dharmas*. It is in conformity with the ways of the world that he makes such a show.

44. 佛想計本，悉斷常不離三昧，現人為說若干(752c)種經法，隨世間習俗而入，示現如是。

The Buddha is never out of *samādhi* even when he ponders over eternity or nihility, but he makes a show to men of preaching various kinds of *dharmas*. It is in conformity with the ways of the world that he makes such a show.<sup>13</sup>

45. 佛前身所作善惡，不可前身得，會當後身得，佛示人自作自得，隨世間習俗而入，示現如是。

What one does good or bad in the former life one will get the result in the following life.<sup>14</sup> The Buddha makes a show to men that one will get the consequences of one's own action. It is in conformity with the ways of the world that he makes such a show.

46. 佛知世間本無人，諸所有本無形，佛現度脫無央數人，隨世間習俗而入，示現如是。

The Buddha understands that there is no person in the world and there is no form with regard to existence, but he makes a show of saving numerous people.<sup>15</sup> It is in conformity with the ways of the world that he makes such a show.

47. 佛知諸經法本空，本亦無所有，現人有更死生，隨世間習俗而入，示現如是。

The Buddha understands that all the *dharmas* are fundamentally empty and that even the essence of them is empty, but he makes a show to men that there are birth and death. It is in conformity with the ways of the world that he makes such a show.

48. 本無今世後世之事，佛現人有今世後世之事，隨世間習俗而入，示現如是。

Fundamentally, there is no this life or the next life, but the Buddha makes a show to men of the existence of this life and the next life. It is in conformity with the ways of the world that he makes such a show.

49. 五陰、六衰、四大合為一本無有，佛示現人，欲界、色界、無思想界，隨世

間習俗而入，示現如是。

The combination of the five aggregates, the six *āyatana*s and the four great elements makes nothing but emptiness, but the Buddha makes a show to men of *kāmadhātu*, *rūpadhātu*, *arūpyadhātu*. It is in conformity with the ways of the world that he makes such a show.

50. 本無過去當來今現在人，佛現死生五道中人，隨世間習俗而入，示現如是。  
Fundamentally, there is no man in the past, present and future, but the Buddha makes a show of a man endowed with birth and death among the five kinds of sentient beings. It is in conformity with the ways of the world that he makes such a show.

51. 佛為悉示，愚癡皆盡，現人本布施，隨世間習俗而入，示現如是。  
The Buddha makes a show to men of having completely eliminated ignorance and of a man making offerings.<sup>16</sup> It is in conformity with the ways of the world that he makes such a show.

52. 過去、當來、今現在經法，佛悉知其本，佛示人可說有不可說，隨世間習俗而入，示現如是。  
The Buddha knows the essence of all the *dharma*s of the past, present and future, but he makes a show to men that there are *dharma*s that can be taught and *dharma*s that cannot be taught.<sup>17</sup> It is in conformity with the ways of the world that he makes such a show.

53. 佛知諸經，本末一切皆深，佛分別各自說其事，隨世間習俗而入，示現如是。  
The Buddha knows that from the beginning to the end all *dharma*s are profound, but he explains them in sequence (e.g. from easy to difficult). It is in conformity with the ways of the world that he makes such a show.

54. 佛所語無有異說，四諦法隨人所解而說，隨世間習俗而入，示現如是。  
What the Buddha taught is none other than (the truth) and the four noble truths are expounded in accordance with the inclination of individuals.<sup>18</sup> It is in conformity with the ways of the world that he makes such a show.

55. 諸比丘僧，難可敗壞，正使數千億萬魔來，及諸惡不能破壞比丘僧，佛現人破壞比丘僧，隨世間習俗而入，示現如是。  
The *bhikṣu saṅgha* is difficult to split, even thousand myriad of *Māras* and evil forces cannot split it, but the Buddha makes a show to men of the *bhikṣu saṅgha* being split by men.<sup>19</sup> It is in conformity with the ways of the world that he makes such a show.

56. 經法本無，從誰學亦莫不學者，佛現人經法，是受戒，是不受戒，隨世間習俗而入，示現如是。  
The Dharma is nothing but empty, there is neither teacher from whom to learn nor

learners, but the Buddha makes a show to men of the Dharma, those who have taken the ordination and those who have not. It is in conformity with the ways of the world that he makes such a show.

57. 空空亦無繫，亦無脫世間，佛示人度脫，隨世間習俗而入，示現如是(753a)。  
There is nothing but emptiness and there is also no liberation from the world, but the Buddha makes a show to men of being a liberated person. It is in conformity with the ways of the world that he makes such a show.

58. 佛般泥洹無所向，阿羅漢般泥洹無所向，佛說法示人，隨世間習俗而入，示現如是。

The Buddha went to nowhere after *parinirvāṇa* and the arhats went to nowhere after *parinirvāṇa*, but the Buddha makes a show to men of preaching the Dharma. It is in conformity with the ways of the world that he makes such a show.

59. 佛說無所生、無所滅，是爲要，亦無所得，亦無所失，隨世間習俗而入，示現如是。

The Buddha taught that there is no birth (*utpāda*) and no extinction (*nirodha*). This is the essence. There is also no gain or loss. It is in conformity with the ways of the world that he makes such a show.

60. 佛說泥洹，譬如燈滅無形，但有字耳，經法無有能壞者，隨世間習俗而入，示現如是。

The Buddha taught that *nirvāṇa* is like the blowing out of (the fire of) the lamp, there is no form. But only the name exists, and nobody can destroy the Dharma. It is in conformity with the ways of the world that he makes such a show.

61. 佛悉知諸經法本無形，佛現人說經法甚眾多，隨世間習俗而入，示現如是。

The Buddha knows well that all *dharmas* are without a form, but he makes a show to men of preaching many *dharmas*. It is in conformity with the ways of the world that he makes such a show.

62. 諸佛心皆無所罣礙，未嘗離三昧時，現人生念，隨世間習俗而入，示現如是。

The Buddhas do not attach to anything in their minds and are never out of *samādhi*, but they make a show to men of having thoughts. It is in conformity with the ways of the world that he makes such a show.

63. 佛諸惡悉盡，但有諸功德具足，佛現人諸惡未盡，隨世間習俗而入，示現如是。

The Buddha has completely eliminated all evils and has only the merits in fullness, but he makes a show to men of having the remaining effects of bad *karma*.<sup>20</sup> It is in conformity with the ways of the world that he makes such a show.

64. 佛身行、口言、心念，當與智慧俱是爲本（無），佛現人，使比丘說經，自復欲聞，隨世間習俗而入，示現如是。

The Buddha's bodily actions, the words of mouth, the thoughts of his mind and his wisdom all are nothing (but empty), but he makes a show to men asking the bhikṣus to preach and himself wishing to listen. It is in conformity with the ways of the world that he makes such a show.

65. 佛智慧所解，無有竭底，過去、當來、今現在本空，佛現人說經法，隨其所喜，各各爲說，隨世間習俗而入，示現如是。

The power (lit. wisdom) of understanding of the Buddha is limitless and the past, present and future are all empty. But the Buddha makes a show to men of delivering the Dharma according to the likes of individuals.<sup>21</sup> It is in conformity with the ways of the world that he makes such a show.

66. 諸佛合一身，以經法爲身，佛現爲人說經法，隨世間習俗而入，示現如是。

All Buddhas have one body, the body of the Dharma, but they make a show of preaching the Dharma to men.<sup>22</sup> It is in conformity with the ways of the world that the Buddha makes such a show.

67. 佛、辟支佛、阿羅漢、未得道人，現死生，得泥洹，隨世間習俗而入，示現如是。

Buddhas, *pratyekabuddhas*, *arhats*, and those who have no attainments appear to be in *saṃsāra* or attain *nirvāṇa*.<sup>23</sup> It is in conformity with the ways of the world that he makes such a show.

68. 佛現爲羅漢說經法悉具足，雖知其具足，不及薩云若，隨世間習俗而入，示現如是。

The Buddha makes a show of preaching the Dharma in completeness to the *arhats*, but he knows that though it is complete it is not as good as the all-knowing (*sarvajñā*).<sup>24</sup> It is in conformity with the ways of the world that he makes such a show.

69. 佛智慧無有能過者，悉知無有過去、當來、今現在，佛現所因緣，說經法，隨世間習俗而入，示現如是。

No one surpasses the wisdom of the Buddha who knows that there is no past, present and future, but he makes a show of the causes and effects and of preaching the Dharma. It is in conformity with the ways of the world that he makes such a show.

70. 中有欲知佛，及了佛法者，經本端界悉入，是人爲曉了佛，隨世間習俗而入，示現如是(753b)。

If someone wishes to know the Buddha and his teachings he should do it by way of



penetrating the essence (which is emptiness). Such a person knows the Buddha.<sup>25</sup> It is in conformity with the ways of the world that the Buddha makes such a show.

71. 菩薩亦不入母腹中，亦不從母腹中出，何以故？經法本界，無所不入，菩薩現人入母腹中，隨世間習俗而入，示現如是。

The bodhisattva never enters into and never comes out from the womb of his mother. Why? Because the suchness (*tathatā*) of the Dharma pervades everywhere.<sup>26</sup> The bodhisattva only makes a show to men of entering into the mother's womb. It is in conformity with the ways of the world that he makes such a show.

72. 無所從生法樂，諸經法亦無所從生，菩薩現人初生時，隨世間習俗而入，示現如是。

There is no arising of the enjoyment of the Dharma and even no arising of the Dharma. The bodhisattva makes a show to men of being newly born.<sup>27</sup> It is in conformity with the ways of the world that he makes such a show.

73. 菩薩母腹空定，含受一佛境界，菩薩各各現人因緣生，隨世間習俗而入，示現如是。

The bodhisattva was in meditation of emptiness in the womb of his mother experiencing the entire one Buddha land, but he makes a show to men of being born due to some causes. It is in conformity with the ways of the world that he makes such a show.

74. 佛化分身在無央數，不可復計佛刹悉遍至，佛身亦不增亦不減，隨世間習俗而入，示現如是。

The Buddha can manifest himself in numerous bodies (*nirmāṇakāya*) and appear in countless Buddha-lands, but the body of the Buddha neither increases nor decreases. It is in conformity with the ways of the world that he makes such a show.

75. 菩薩常現生，無有絕時，常本無而住不勤苦，隨世間習俗而入，示現如是。

The bodhisattva always manifests himself (in the world) and never stops. The essence is empty so he abides there without making any effort. It is in conformity with the ways of the world that he makes such a show.

76. 佛智慧、功德、威神，不可復計，佛現人限長短，使人知之，隨世間習俗而入，示現如是。

The wisdom, merit and power of the Buddha are immeasurable, but he makes a show of having limited lifespan to let people know (the work of karma?).<sup>29</sup> It is in conformity with the ways of the world that he makes such a show.

77. 經法本界，無有能過者，過去、當來、今現在皆空故，佛現人尊經法，隨世間習俗而入，示現如是。

The suchness of the Dharma cannot be surpassed because the past, present and future are empty.<sup>30</sup> The Buddha makes a show to men of respecting the Dharma. It is in conformity with the ways of the world that he makes such a show.

78. 本無所生無所滅，經本界悉入，佛現人境界壞敗時，隨世間習俗而入，示現如是。

The suchness of (the Dharma) is without birth and extinction (*nirodha*), but the Buddha makes a show to men of conditions being in extinction.<sup>31</sup> It is in conformity with the ways of the world that he makes such a show.

79. 經法本無所從生，無形而住，佛現經法，隨世間習俗而入，示現如是。

There is no arising of the Dharma and it exists without form, but the Buddha makes a show of the Dharma.<sup>32</sup> It is in conformity with the ways of the world that he makes such a show.

80. 觀本無，亦無所見，亦無所視，佛視人悉見悉了悉知，隨世間習俗而入，示現如是。

Observing the nature (of the Dharma) it can never be seen, but the Buddha makes a show to men of seeing all, knowing all and understanding all.<sup>33</sup> It is in conformity with the ways of the world that he makes such a show.

81. 諸經法無有作者，亦無所出生，佛現人經法，本無所出生，隨世間習俗而入，示現如是。

There is no creator to all the *dharmas* and also there is no arising of it, but the Buddha makes a show to men of *dharmas* which have no arising (*utpāda*).<sup>34</sup> It is in conformity with the ways of the world that he makes such a show.

82. 泥洹及空，無有形聲，亦無有名，佛現四大及形聲，隨世間習俗而入，示現如是。

*Nirvāṇa* and emptiness are without form, sound and name, but the Buddha makes a show of having (the physical body consisted of) the four great elements endowed with form and sound. It is in conformity with the ways of the world that he makes such a show.

83. 佛力無有雙比，不可復計，亦無減盡時，現人衰老，求人給使，隨世間習俗而入，示現如是(753c)。

The strength of the Buddha is incomparable and immeasurable without decrease, but he makes a show to men of being old and decrepit who seeks help from others. It is in conformity with the ways of the world that he makes such a show.

84. 佛慈哀悉遍等，終無有厄難窮極時，佛現癡人，不當與從事，隨世間習俗而入，示現如是。

The Buddha is equally compassionate to all and there are no calamities or any poverty, but he makes a show to the foolish men of not doing anything.<sup>35</sup> It is in conformity with the ways of the world that he makes such a show.

85. 佛諸功德，成就悉具足，佛現功德少所，隨世間習俗而入，示現如是。  
The Buddha has accomplished all the merits, but he makes a show of having little merit.<sup>36</sup> It is in conformity with the ways of the world that he makes such a show.

86. 無所從生本，從中亦無所出生，佛現三門者，隨世間習俗而入，示現如是。  
The nature (of the Dharma) arises from nowhere and it produces nothing, but the Buddha makes a show of three doors (of past, present and future). It is in conformity with the ways of the world that he makes such a show.

87. 佛現本末，無所罣礙，功德福無有能過者，佛現人有施與者，不斯受趣足而已，示不貪，隨世間習俗而入，示現如是。  
The Buddha makes a show of the beginning and the end without obstacles, no one can surpass his merit. He also makes a show to men of one who accepts offerings without making distinction and makes a show of no attachment.<sup>37</sup> It is in conformity with the ways of the world that he makes such a show.

88. 人有至誠，善意念佛者，佛即為現，佛亦無處所，佛現身行菩薩道者，隨世間習俗而入，示現如是。  
Any one sincerely and earnestly calls the Buddha in his mind, the Buddha will appear before him, but the Buddha has no abode. The Buddha makes a show of practicing the path of bodhisattva. It is in conformity with the ways of the world that he makes such a show.

89. 佛度脫不可復計阿僧祇人，為不度一人，何以故？本無故，隨世間習俗而入，示現如是。  
The Buddha has saved immeasurable *asamkhyeya* people, but he has saved none. Why? Because it is fundamentally empty.<sup>38</sup> It is in conformity with the ways of the world that he makes such a show.

佛珍寶內藏經，人有聞者，無有不得安隱，度數千萬億劫無數如是。菩薩世世所行，用十方人故，菩薩世世行經戒，未曾有犯時，用是得佛智慧，有應是行，得佛疾。菩薩行慈哀，有益十方無極，有作是行者，得佛疾。何人聞是不奉行者，佛威神巍巍，其有聞經法莫不過度。佛說經已，文殊師利菩薩及諸菩薩等，皆歡喜前為佛作禮而去。

If anyone hears the \**Lokānuvartanasūtra* he will surely attain peace because it saves thousand of myriad *koṭis* of people. The bodhisattva practices (the dharma) in every birth for the sake of the people of the ten directions. The bodhisattva practices (the dharma) in every birth without violating the precepts and thus he attains the wisdom

of the Buddha. Anyone who practices such acts will attain Buddhahood soon. The bodhisattva practices compassion for the benefit (of the people) of the ten directions to the utmost. Anyone who does such practices will also attain Buddhahood soon. Does anyone who hears the magnificence of the Buddha not practice? Those who hear this teaching will surely be saved. When the Buddha had finished his preaching, Mañjuśrī bodhisattva and the other bodhisattvas were delighted and left after rising, going forward and paying their respect to the Buddha.

<sup>1</sup> This is one of the oldest Buddhist *sūtras* extant and there is also one Tibetan translation and some Sanskrit fragments. The Tibetan translation is entirely in verse and comprises of 113 four-line stanzas with seven syllables to each line. The Chinese translation is entirely in prose but reflects its being in verse form by the repetition of the last line in every section. Prof. Paul Harrison has translated the Sanskrit fragments into English with an introduction. See Harrison (1982) The Chinese translation is very difficult to understand. It, therefore, has to be read in conjunction with the *Daoxingboruojing*, the oldest Chinese translation of the \**Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitāsūtra* since they are translated by the same person and are based on the same thought. For the sake of convenience of reference, the present translator adds the number to each section. In the following translation, sections 04, 07, 08, 09 12, 17, 18, 19, 20, 22, 23, 30, 31 and 34 are adopted from Prof. Paul Harrison (1982) with minor changes. Some of the sentences in the text are unintelligible since the text was translated into Chinese almost eighteen hundred years ago when Buddhism was newly introduced into China. Therefore, this is a tentative translation.

<sup>2</sup> The sentence literally can be rendered as “By what causes does the bodhisattva know the internal and external things respectively?” But the word internal (內) also means the Buddha’s teaching such as “內明”.

<sup>3</sup> This means that the historical Buddha is regarded as a transformation.

<sup>4</sup> The light of seven *chi* refers to the mark of one fashion long rays in the thirty-two major marks as we have discussed in the second chapter.

<sup>5</sup> The story of the Buddha uttering words right after his birth is found in both the *Acchariyādbhūtasutta* of the *Majjhimanikāya* (M iii, 118-124.) and the Chinese translation of the \**Madhyamāgama*. (T1, 469c-471c)

<sup>6</sup> The six years of austerities of Gautama the Buddha is considered by the Sarvāstivādins as the remaining effect of the past bad *karma*. But the Mahāsāṃghikas conceived it as a show.

<sup>7</sup> This should be understood in conjunction with the teachings of the \**Aṣṭasāhasrikā* in which it states that Buddha is nothing but *sūnyatā*.

<sup>8</sup> Here it is interesting to notice that the Dharma is considered as the body of the Buddha, the *dharmakāya*. This is in conformity with the teaching of early Buddhism.

<sup>9</sup> This should be understood in conjunction with the next section that the Buddha is empty. If the Buddha is empty then the body of the Buddha is naturally an illusion.

<sup>10</sup> This also refers to one of the ten bad *karmas* of the Buddha, which the Mahāsāṃghikas reject.

<sup>11</sup> Here the Chinese word 嬈 has two meanings. The first is in verb form, ‘to disturb’ and the second is in adjective form, ‘beautiful’ and ‘charming’. So as Professor Timothy Barrett suggests that it probably mean that the Buddha was tempted and disturbed by the daughters of Māra.

<sup>12</sup> This is probably the first *sūtra* in which the Buddhas of the ten direction of the

world spoken of. It is important in the sense that it is a horizontal development of the number of Buddhas after the vertical development.

<sup>13</sup> This is the same as in Vasumitra's treatise that the Buddha is always in *samādhi*.

<sup>14</sup> The sentence is corrupted so the meaning is not clear.

<sup>15</sup> This is in accordance with the teachings of the \**Aṣṭasāhasrikā* that all are illusion and empty so that there is no one to save and even no saviour.

<sup>16</sup> The meaning of this sentence is also not clear.

<sup>17</sup> Here it perhaps means the unanswered questions by those *dharma*s that cannot be taught or perhaps the ultimate truth which cannot be described by words.

<sup>18</sup> This is the same as in Vasumitra's treatise, all the speeches of the Tathāgata are (concerned with) the preaching of the righteous law. J.Masuda, (1922), p.19.

<sup>19</sup> This perhaps refers to the split of the saṅgha by Devadatta, which is looked upon by the author of the *sūtra* as a show by the Buddha.

<sup>20</sup> This obviously refers to the discussion on the bad *karma* of the Buddha between the Sarvāstivāda and the Mahāsāṃghika.

<sup>21</sup> This is similar to the proposition in Vasumitra's treatise that (the blessed one) understands all things (*dharma*) in a moment's thought (*ekakṣaṇikacitta*).

<sup>22</sup> This refers to the *dharmakāya* which in the text means the teaching of the Buddha.

<sup>23</sup> This sentence is difficult to interpret.

<sup>24</sup> Here, it obviously makes the difference that the *dharma* of the bodhisattvas is superior to that of the arhats.

<sup>25</sup> This sentence is unintelligible. It perhaps means that to know the Buddha is to know the essence of it, the emptiness.

<sup>26</sup> This sentence is unintelligible. It perhaps means that the Buddha is basically empty so he never goes anywhere.

<sup>27</sup> This sentence is corrupted, the meaning is not clear.

<sup>28</sup> This sentence is corrupted and the meaning is not clear.

<sup>29</sup> The word 限 is probably a mistake for 壽, meaning lifespan.

<sup>30</sup> The first part of the sentence is corrupted.

<sup>31</sup> This sentence is corrupted.

<sup>32</sup> This means that the *Dharma* is nothing but empty, the Buddha makes a show of it.

<sup>33</sup> Here 佛視 which means "the Buddha sees", should be 佛現 which means "the Buddha makes a show".

<sup>34</sup> This part of the sentence is not clear.

<sup>35</sup> It is difficult to understand the latter part of the sentence.

<sup>36</sup> This is perhaps to say that the Buddha who suffered the bad *karmas* in the world is nothing but a show of little merit.

<sup>37</sup> This sentence is unintelligible.

<sup>38</sup> This thought is typical the thought of the \**Aṣṭasāhasrikā* that all are illusions and emptiness. So there is no sentient being to save. Here it clearly shows the link between this *sūtra* and the \**Aṣṭasāhasrikā*.

## Appendix II

### Chronology of Chinese Translation of Mahāyāna sūtras and śāstras

In this chronology, the major translators and their representative translations have been chosen in order to illustrate that they roughly reflect the development of Buddhist thought in India. The date of the first translation is used in case that there are more than one translation of the same text extant. This is because the first translation reflects the date of appearance of the particular text.

#### Lokakṣema (178-189)

- \**Ajātaśatruṛāja-sūtra* (佛說阿闍世王經), T15, No.626.
- \**Akṣobhyatathāgatasyavyūha-sūtra* (阿[門+人/人人]佛國經), T11, No.313.
- Daoxingbanruojing* (a version of the *Aṣṭa* 道行般若經), T8, No.224.
- \**Lokānuvartana-sūtra* (佛說內藏百寶經), T17, No.807.
- \**Pratyutpanna-buddhasammukhāvasthitā-samādhi-sūtra* (般舟三昧經), T13, No.418.

#### Others

- \**Caryānidāna-sūtra* (修行本起經), T3, No.184, tr. Mahābala, together with Kang Menxiang, 197.
- \**Madhyametyukta-sūtra* (中本起經), T4, No.196, tr. Dharmaphala together with Kang Menxiang, 207.
- Xingqixingjing* (佛說興起行經 *Nidānacaryā-sūtra?*), T4, No.197, tr. Kang Menxiang, 194-199.

#### Zhi Qian (222-280)

- Damingdujing* (a version of the *Aṣṭa* 大明度經), T8, No.225.
- \**Jñānamudrāsamādhi-sūtra* (佛說慧印三昧經), T15, No.632.
- \**Kumāra-kuśalaphala-nidāna-sūtra* (太子瑞應本起經), T3, No.185.
- \**Pūrṇamukhāvadāna-śataka* (撰集百緣經), T4, No.200.
- Sukhāvātīvyūha-sūtra* (佛說阿彌陀三耶三佛薩樓佛檀過度人道經) T12, No.362.
- \**Vimalakīrtinirdeśa-sūtra* (佛說維摩詰經), T14, No.474.
- Yizu-jing* (佛說義足經 *Sūtra on the Sufficiency of Truth*), T4, No.198.

#### Mokṣala, (291)

- \**Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā-sūtra* (放光般若經), T8, No.221.

#### Dharmarakṣa (266-313)

- \**Buddhasaṅgīti-sūtra* (諸佛要集經), T17, No.810.
- Dengmupusasuowensanmei-jing* (等目菩薩所問三昧經 *Sūtra on a Samādhi asked by the Bodhisattva Samacakṣus*), T10, No.288.
- Dushipin-jing* (度世品經 *Sūtra of the chapter on going across the world*), T10,

No.292.

*Jianbeiyiqiezhide-jing* (漸備一切智德經 *Sūtra* on making gradually complete all the wisdom and virtue), T10, No.285.

\**Maitreya-paripṛcchā-sūtra* (彌勒菩薩所問本願經) T12, No.349.

\**Mañjuśrībuddhakṣetraguṇavyūha-sūtra* (文殊師利佛土嚴淨經), T11, No.318.

\**Mūkakumāra-sūtra* (佛說無言童子經), T13, No.401.

\**Pañcaśatasthavirāvadāna-sūtra* (佛五百弟子自說本起經), T4, No.199.

\**Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā-sūtra* (光讚經), T8, No.222.

*Pusaxingwushiyuansheng-jing* (菩薩行五十緣身經) [*Sūtra* spoken by the Buddha on (the characteristic marks on) his person as (the result of) fifty causes of the practice of *bodhisattva*], T17, No.812.

*Rulaixingxian-jing* (如來興顯經 *Sūtra* spoken by the Buddha on the manifestation of the Tathāgata), T10, No.291.

\**Samantaprabhāsa-sūtra* (普曜經), T3, No.186.

\**Saddharmapuṇḍarīka-sūtra* (正法華經), T9, No.263.

\**Sucintidevaputra-sūtra* (須真天子經), T15, No.588.

\**Tathāgatamahākāraṇikanirdeśa-sūtra* (大哀經), T13, No.398.

\**Upāyakauśālyasūtra* (慧上菩薩問大善權經), T12, No.345.

### **Saṅghabhūti (381-385)**

*Vibhāṣāśāstra* (鞞婆沙論), T28, No.1547, tr. Saṅghabhūti, Dharmanandin, Buddharaṣa, 383.

### **Kumārajīva (402-413)**

\**Brahmajāla-sūtra* (梵網經), T24, No.1484.

\**Daśabhāṇavāraṇīya*, (十誦律), T23, No.1435.

\**Daśabhūmika-sūtra* (十住經), T10, No.286.

\**Daśabhūmikavibhāṣā-śāstra* (十住毘婆沙論), T26, No.1521, attrib. Nāgārjuna.

\**Dhyānaniṣṭhitasamādhi-sūtra* (坐禪三昧經), T15, No.614, by Saṅgharakṣa.

\**Kāraṇīkārājā-prajñāpāramitā-sūtra* (仁王般若波羅蜜經), T8, No.245.

\**Mahālaṅkāra-sūtra-śāstra* (大莊嚴經論), T4, No.201, attrib. Aśvaghōṣa.

\**Mahāprajñāpāramitā-śāstra* (大智度論), T25, No.1509, attrib. Nāgārjuna.

\**Maitreya-vyākaraṇa-sūtra* (佛說彌勒下生成佛經) T14, No.454.

\**Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā-sūtra* (摩訶般若波羅蜜經), T8, No.223.

\**Prajñāpāramitāsūtra* (a version of the *Aṣṭa* 小品般若波羅蜜經), T8, No.227.

\**Saddharmapuṇḍarīka-sūtra* (妙法蓮華經), T9, No.262.

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\**Vimalakīrtinirdeśa-sūtra* (維摩詰所說經), T14, No.475.

### **Buddhabhadra (410-421)**

\**Buddhadhyānasamādhisāgara-sūtra* (佛說觀佛三昧海經), T15, No.643.

\**Buddhāvataṃsaka-mahāvaiṣṭyā-sūtra* (大方廣佛華嚴經), T9, No.278.

\**Mahāvaiṣṭyā-tathāgatagarbha-sūtra* (大方等如來藏經), T16, No.666.

### Dharmakṣena (414-426)

\**Bodhisattvabhūmidhara-sūtra* (菩薩地持經), T30, No.1581.

*Buddhacarita* (佛所行讚), T4, No.192, by Aśvaghosa.

\**Karuṇāpuṇḍarīka-sūtra* (悲華經), T3, No.157.

*Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra* (大般涅槃經), T12, No.374. (Mahāyāna version)

\**Suvarṇaprabhāsa-sūtra* (金光明經), T16, No.663.

### Guṇabhadra (435-468)

*Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra* (楞伽阿跋多羅寶經), T16, No.670.

\**Prakaranaṭṭhāna-sāstra* (眾事分阿毘曇論), T26, No.1541, attrib. Vasumitra.

\**Samyuktāgama* (雜阿含經) T2, No.99.

\**Śrīmālādevīsīṃhanāda-sūtra* (勝鬘師子吼一乘大方便方廣經), T12, No.353.

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### Bodhiruci (508-535)

\**Daśabhūmikāsūtra-sāstra* (十住經論), T26, No.1522, by Vasubandhu.

*Buzengbujian-jing* (佛說不增不減經 Sūtra on neither increasing nor decreasing), T16, No.668.

*Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra* (入楞伽經), T16, No.671.

\**Mahāsatyanirgranthaputra-vyākaraṇa-sūtra* (大薩遮尼乾子所說經), T9, No.272.

\**Sandhinirmocana-sūtra* (深密解脫經), T16, No.675.

### Buddhaśanti (525-539)

\**Mahāyānadaśadharmaka-sūtra* (大寶積經·大乘十法會), T11, No.310.9.

*Mahāyānasamgraha* of Asaṅga (攝大乘論), T31, No.1592.

### Paramārtha (546-569)

\**Abhidharma-kośavyākhyā-sāstra* (阿毘達磨俱舍釋論), T29, No.1559, by Vasubandhu.

\**Anuttarāśraya-sūtra* (佛說無上依經), T16, No.669.

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\**Samayabhedavyūhacakra* (部執異論), T49, No.2033, by Vasumitra.

### Xuanzang (645-664)

\**Abhidharma-dharmaskandhapāda-śāstra* (阿毘達磨法蘊足論), T26, No.1537,  
attrib. Śāriputra (Sanskrit version), Mahāmaudgalyāyana (Chinese version).

\**Abhidharma-jñānaprasthāna-śāstra* (阿毘達磨發智論), T26, No.1544, attrib.  
Kātyāyanīputra.

\**Abhidharma-kośa-śāstra* (阿毘達磨俱舍論), T29, No.1558, by Vasubandhu.

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Saṅghabhadra.

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by Saṅghabhadra.

\**Abhidharma-prakaraṇapāda-śāstra* (阿毘達磨品類足論), T26, No.1542, attrib.  
Vasumitra.

\**Abhidharma-vijñānakāyapāda-śāstra* (阿毘達磨識身足論), T26, No.1539, attrib.  
Devaśarman.

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\**Mahāyānābhidharmasamṃyuktasaṅgīti-śāstra* (大乘阿毗達磨雜集論), T31, No.1606,  
by Sthiramati.

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\**Pañcavastukavibhāṣā-śāstra* (五事毘婆沙論), T28, No.1555, attrib. Dharmatrātā.

\**Samayabhedavyūhacakra*, by Vasumitra, (異部宗輪論), T49 (2031).

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others.

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### Yijing (695-713)

\**Samghabhedavastu* of the *Mūlasarvāstivāda-vinaya* (根本說一切有部破僧事), T24,  
No.1450.

\**Bhaiṣajyavastu* of the *Mūlasarvāstivāda-vinaya* (根本說一切有部藥事), T24,  
No.1448.

\**Maitreya-vyākaraṇa-sūtra* (佛說彌勒下生成佛經) T14, No.455.

\**Mūlasarvāstivādavastu* (根本說一切有部毘奈耶) T23, No.1442.

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