

# 3

## Cosmic Buddhas and Paradises

A psychological analysis of Chinese Buddhism  
by Piya Tan ©2008 (2<sup>nd</sup> rev), 2009 (3<sup>rd</sup> rev)

### 3.1 RELIGION AS THE WILL TO DENY

Religion is often about *denying* what we do *not* wish to believe. This is especially true of the God-faiths and the various Buddhisms. No one has seen God, but they deny his or her non-existence. When we do not really know God or the Buddha, we tend to create him in our own image. If there is no God, it would be necessary to invent him, quipped the French atheist Voltaire.<sup>1</sup> Apparently, he meant that he did not really care whether his peers were religious or not. He wanted his servants to be religious so that they would not kill him in his sleep and rob him!

The Buddha is dead but many Buddhists do not let him rest. Many simply could not accept that even the best of us must die; *so we deny his death*. Most Mahāyāna Buddhists view the Buddha, even Shakyamuni (the historical Buddha), as a cosmic God-like figure.<sup>2</sup> There is a wealth of evidence that Shakyamuni Buddha was born, lived, taught and died in India.<sup>3</sup> Mahāyāna texts, such as the Lotus Sutra [2.8.2], present a cosmic Buddha who is never born, never dies, pre-existent, immanent and eternal.

The ancient Chinese Buddhists, and Mahāyāna Buddhists, as a rule, do not entertain the view that the Buddha ever died. This is of course they are very close to the theistic belief in an eternal God, which serves as a hopeful antithesis of suffering and death. Chinese religion never had a God-idea like that of the Christians, but they way they viewed the Buddha's existence came close to it—that is, insofar as they deny that the Buddha has died (that is, attained final nirvana).

### 3.2 STAGES OF GRIEF AND COPING

For those who follow early Buddhism, especially the oral tradition of the Pali Canon, the Buddha has attained final nirvana: *he is dead*.<sup>4</sup> They know, too, that even though the Teacher may be dead, *the Teaching still lives*. In **the Mahā Parinibbāna Sutta** (D 16) the Buddha is recorded as unequivocally declaring:

Then the Blessed One addressed the venerable Ānanda:

“Ānanda, it may be that you would think:

‘Gone is the Teacher’s word! We have no teacher.’

It should not be seen thus, Ānanda, for the Dharma and the Vinaya [the Teaching and the Discipline] that I have taught and explained to you, will, at my passing, be your teacher.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “Voltaire” was the pen-name of Marie-François Arouet (1694-1778), whose intelligence, style, and wit, made him one of France’s greatest names. A writer, essayist, deist and philosopher of the French Enlightenment, he is known for his wit, philosophical sport and defence of civil liberties, incl freedom of religion and free trade.

<sup>2</sup> On Shinran’s deification (as Amida’s manifestation), see **Monastics, sex and marriage** = SD 38.9 (2.1.4.3). Such a predisposition is, of course, not limited to the Chinese Mahayanists. Take, eg, the foll excerpts from Datuk Dr Victor WEE’s *Buddha Pūjā*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed, 2008: “O Buddha, | My Spiritual Master and Refuge, | I seek Your Blessings, | Guidance, and Protection!” (29); “With my Lord helping me, | I solemnly declare before Thee and promise... I pledge that I will faithfully be, | With my Lord helping me. (55); this latter excerpt was written by Wee’s grandmother). Victor WEE was a very strong supporter of Sinhala Siam Nikaya missionary monk, K Sri Dhammananda, and the Buddhist Missionary Society (BMS) in KL, Malaysia. (After Dhammananda’s death in 2006, the BMS was induced to leave to work independently.)

<sup>3</sup> See eg <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/abstract.html?res=9D06E3D81539E433A25753C1A9629C946196D6CF>.

<sup>4</sup> This is of course speaking in worldly terms. On the ultimate level, in Dharma language, the Buddha cannot be said to living or dead, or both or neither: see **Nivāpa S** (M 25.10/1:157 f); **Cūḷa Māluṅkya,putta S** (M 63.2-3/-1:426-428); **Aggi Vaccha,gotta S** (M 72.9-12/1:483 f, 72.20/1:487 f).

<sup>5</sup> **The Gārava S** (S 6.2/1:138-140 = SD 12.2) relates how the newly-awakened Buddha declares that the Dharma is his teacher, worthy of his reverence. The above may be said to give the essence of the Mahā Parinibbāna S (D 16). The term *sattā* (teacher) is here redefined: while the Buddha lives, *he* is teacher; after his passing, the role is found in the Dharma and Vinaya. With the Buddha’s passing, Buddhism ceases to be a *cult* (where the teacher or leader is the final authority) and becomes *a spiritual system or teaching-centred religion*. In this sense, it may be

(D 16.6.1/2:153) = SD 9

The Sutta also records that many, human and divine, “lamenting, with hair dishevelled; lamenting, with arms outstretched; fallen to the ground as if their feet have been cut off, rolling to and fro, crying” at the passing of the Buddha.<sup>6</sup> Following these references, it is also stated, in contrast, that those “that are free from lust accept it mindfully and fully aware,” reflecting on the nature of impermanence.<sup>7</sup>

In secular psychology, we are told that when someone very near and dear to us dies, we go through various stages of mourning. The Swiss psychiatrist, **Elisabeth Kübler-Ross** (1926-2004), author of the ground-breaking book, *Death and Dying* (1973), formulated this *Kübler-Ross model of grief*, also known as “the five stages of grief”:

- [[Shock stage](#): Initial paralysis at hearing the bad news.]
- [[Denial stage](#): Trying to avoid the inevitable: “It can’t be happening.”]
- [[Anger stage](#): Frustrated outpouring of bottled-up emotion: “Why me? It’s not fair!”]
- [[Bargaining stage](#): Seeking in vain for a way out”: “Just let me see my children graduate.”]
- [[Depression stage](#): Final realization of the inevitable: “I’m so sad, why bother with anything.”]
- [[Testing stage](#): Seeking realistic solutions.]
- [[Acceptance stage](#): Finally finding the way forward: “It’s going to be all right.”]

The most difficult stage here is often that of “denial,” the symptoms and treatment of which have been suggested here by grief specialists:<sup>8</sup>

### Symptoms of denial

After *the initial shock* has worn off, the next stage is usually one of *classic denial*, where they pretend that the news has not been given. They effectively close their eyes to any evidence and pretend that nothing has happened.

Typically, they will continue their life as if nothing has happened. In the workplace, they will carry on doing their job even if that job is no longer required.

A classic behavior here is a “flight into health,” where previously-perceived problems are suddenly seen as having miraculously fixed themselves.

### Treatment

You can move a person out of denial by deliberately provoking them to anger. Hold up the future (sympathetically) so they cannot avoid or deny it. Tell them that it is not fair. Show anger yourself (thus legitimizing that they get angry).

This, to some extent, is done on daytime TV shows where people in precarious situations are prodded into emotional explosions that make good TV and (where sympathetically done) may even be good for them.

Restated in Buddhist terms, denial of a loved one’s death (or any emotionally difficult situation) is significantly alleviated, shortened, or ended by understanding and accepting the real situation. The practice of the perception of impermanence (*anicca,saññā*) is very helpful here. Feel the pain, if it is there, examine it for what it really is (an impermanent, uncertain, hollow feeling). Then, we must adjust our-

said that the MPS is the Buddha’s last will and testament to his spiritual heirs. On the other hand, while the religious and faith-inclined accept that the Buddha’s authority and presence have been *spiritually* transferred to the Dharma and Vinaya, they still perceive that he is “*physically*” transferred into his relics, the stupa and the Buddha image. See Ray 1994: 348-352, 364. See **Miraculous Stories** = SD 27.5b (6.2).

<sup>6</sup> D 16.5.6+6.10+11+12+19+20/2:139 f, 148, 157-159, 162 = SD 9. Ānanda, too, is reported as “leaning against the door-post, weeping” (D 16.5.13/2:143 f). See also DhA 4:93.

<sup>7</sup> D 16.5.6+6.10+11+19+20/2:140, 158, 162 f. Cf the old Subhadda, who does not grieve, relieved at the Buddha’s passing (D 16.6.20/2:162)!

<sup>8</sup> See [http://changingminds.org/disciplines/change\\_management/kubler\\_ross/denial\\_stage.htm](http://changingminds.org/disciplines/change_management/kubler_ross/denial_stage.htm).

selves to the real world from which the departed has left for good. In this way, we can let go of the past and reinvest our emotional and spiritual energies in the present, in true reality.<sup>9</sup>

### 3.3 THE BUDDHA AS A SUPREME BEING

**3.3.1 Denial of the Buddha's death.** Now, what happens when we deny the Buddha's passing away, and continue to do so for centuries after the Buddha's passing away? The most significant result of such a chronic denial, I think, is that *we would apotheosize or deify the Buddha*. We would deny his *humanity* and instead attribute *deity* to him.<sup>10</sup>

In fact, this is just what the **Mahāsaṅghika** did: they regarded the Buddha as being “supramundane” (*lokottara*), which literally means “beyond the world,” *not* of this world (*laukika*). The branch of the Mahāsaṅghika that upheld such a dogma was known as the Lokottara, vāda (the Supramundane School).

According to their view, this is not to say that the Buddha who appeared in India some 2600 years ago was false, but that he was not what he appeared to be. We see him going through the motions of a normal human being—being born, seeing the truth, awakening, teaching the Dharma, taking almsfood, attending to his bodily functions, and passing away. But these are merely a “play” (*līla*) for the benefit of worldlings. Such a docetic view<sup>11</sup> of the Buddha can be found in what little remains of Mahāsaṅghika literature, that is, **the Mahāvastu** and their **Bhikṣuṇī Vinaya**.

According to the Lokottara, vāda, since the Buddha was a transcendent being, even his physical body (*rūpa, kāya*) was imperishable and incorruptible. In fact, the Buddha was viewed as being omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent and eternal—just as the God-believers view their God today. However, there is an important difference: while the God-believers see themselves as *creatures* of a creator, these docetic Buddhists viewed that they can themselves *become* bodhisattvas or Buddhas.

Yet both the docetic Lokottara, vādins and the modern God-believers share one common notion, that is, what I call “the transcendentalism of power.” Both groups have a sense of being powerless, or at least less powerful, before a greater power. Spirituality and godliness have been externalized in such a manner that the *worshipper*—this is what the individual becomes here—is unable to see any personal potential or even self-worth. He perceives a need to be *saved* by an externalized saviour.<sup>12</sup>

**3.3.2 The Buddha as a trinity.** The view that the historical Buddha was merely an earthly manifestation of an eternal omniscient cosmic Buddha—or, *docetism*—formed the basis for the Mahāyāna explanation of the Three Bodies (*tri, kāya*) of a Buddha [see below]. The **Lokottara, vāda** school spread to Afghanistan where, some time between the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries CE, they built the colossal Buddhas at Bamiyan, reflecting their view of transcendent Buddhas.

The **Bahu, śrutīya** school, on the other hand, asserted that the Buddha had imparted both worldly teachings and other-worldly teachings. This led to the Mahāyāna division between a Buddha's “emanated body” (Skt *nirmāṇa, kāya*; Tib *sprul-sku = tulku*) and the “enjoyment body” (*sambhoga, kāya*).

<sup>9</sup> See William Worden, *Grief Counseling and Grief Therapy* (1992). Worden's “four tasks of grief” are summarized in <http://ubhc.umdj.edu/brti/FreeholdStudentsVehicularDeaths.doc>.

<sup>10</sup> **I B Horner** proposes: “It is likely that the idea of Gotama as a god...came more and more to be in the air...as his life on earth receded into the past...the urge to worship required some outlet in the present” (1936:203). **Hajime Nakamura** writes that in the early texts, the Buddha “was in every respect regarded merely as a superior man,” but after his death, “as a consequence of the gradual process of deification...he works wonders, he is omniscient” (1960: 152, 157). **Paul Harrison** notes how “with the passage of time the Buddha became less an object of emulation and more an object of devotion, growing in stature as memories faded” (1978:37).

<sup>11</sup> Docetism refers to the view where the reality of a holy figure's (here the Buddha's) physical body was denied, “or at least various of the normal carnal properties and functions were refused in favor of those more spiritual or ethereal” (Macmillan Ency of Religion, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed 2004: docetism). The Buddha, in other word words, had only the appearance (Gk *dokesis*) of a human, and only seemed (*dokein*) to be a man. The main force behind such a belief here is the denial of the Buddha's death. This is not a popular term in Buddhist studies today, but if we are dealing with the divinization of the Buddha, this can be a helpful term.

<sup>12</sup> An attempt at correcting this spiritual imbalance would later be expressed in the notion of Buddha-nature [4.2].

The **Caitika** school broke away from the Bahu,śrutiya, and asserted that the Buddha was already awakened even before he appeared in this world, and was only merely display his awakening to show others the way—an assertion that was accepted later by the Mahāyāna.

Based on such **Mahā,saṅghika** views, the conception of the Buddha further developed in the early Mahāyāna sutras, such as the Prajñā,pāramitā literature and the Saddharma,puṇḍarīka Sūtra, according to which the Buddha has a retinue of great bodhisattvas who have one more birth before awakening, and also a great amount of merit accumulated through his practice of the six perfections (*pāramitā*).

On the other hand, the Mahāyāna conception of Buddha is also connected with the concept of emptiness (*sūnyatā*), that is, the Buddha is one who has realized the Dharma that is empty. Therefore, the Buddha, too, is empty. The author of the Mahā,prajñā,pāramitā Śāstra summarized the teachings on the concept of Buddha in the different schools as well as in the early Mahāyāna sutras, and explained further that the **Dharma,kāya** is the real Buddha who is always teaching the Dharma to the great bodhisattvas, while his physical body (*rūpa,kāya*) is only an emanated one.

In the 4th century, through the efforts of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu, Mahāyāna grew in influence, but met with heavy criticisms that it was not the authentic teaching of the Buddha. In order to legitimize Mahāyāna as the Buddha's teaching, the author of **the Mahāyāna,sūtrālamkāra**<sup>13</sup> synthesized the existing practices and theories of Mahāyāna of his predecessors. In this way, he integrated and fine-tuned these views into more advanced theories. One of the most influential theories is, of course, that of the *tri,kāya*.

Briefly, **the Three Bodies** (*tri,kāya*) comprises of the *nirmāṇa,kāya* (emanated body) which manifests themselves in time and space (eg the Buddha's appearance to the human world); the *sambhoga,kāya* (the body of mutual enjoyment) which is an archetypal manifestation (eg the Buddha's appearance to the divine world); and the *Dharma,kāya* (the truth or reality body) which embodies the very principle of awakening and is boundless (the Buddha as a transcendental being). The *nirmāṇa,kāya* is the historical Buddha who appears in physical form, but really is a sort of holographic manifestation. The *sambhoga,kāya* is the "reward-body," whereby a bodhisattva fulfills his vows and becomes a Buddha. Rebirth in Amitābha's paradise is an example of this. The *Dharma,kāya* is the embodiment of true reality itself. In Tantra,yāna, Vairocana Buddha often represents the ineffable truth-body. It is in this context, that **the Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra** 楞伽經 *Léngqié jīng*<sup>14</sup> quotes the Buddha as declaring, "They know not the Tathāgata's generic names... which they regard as the moon in the water" (*na ca prajānanti tathāgatasyaite nāmaparyāyā iti...udakacandra ivāpraviṣṭanirgatam*). (LaṅkavS 3.85)<sup>15</sup>

### 3.4 HOW TO WRITE YOUR OWN SUTRA

**3.4.1 If you can't beat them, join them—then beat them.** There was a time, within living memory, when we had great difficulty finding any Buddhist text or book on Buddhism in English, much less the works of those practitioners who were well versed in the Suttas and the Dharma. Even today, many people are still caught up with "lecture-hall Buddhism," where the audience measures the value of what they hear according to *who* speaks it rather than *how useful or effective* these teachings are for inner stillness and spiritual growth. On the other hand, many speakers are more eager and diligent in their efforts to win over the audience as loyal followers and supporters than to present the Buddha Dharma as it is. The idea is to sugarcoat the teachings so that the audience would want to come back for more.

However, today, if the true seeker truly seeks, he will find many excellent Sutta texts and translations, both hard and soft, and very informative, inspiring, life-changing books on Buddhism. But since religion

<sup>13</sup> This text was said to be one of five Mahāyāna texts taught to Asaṅga (310-390?) by "Maitreya" (presumably the future Buddha) in Tuṣita: see Paul Williams, *Mahāyāna Buddhism*, 1989: 80 f (see index). This is one way of legitimating teachings that are not supported by early Buddhism. Historically, it is probable that it was written by Asaṅga himself during the 4<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>14</sup> LaṅkavS (Vaidya's ed) 3.85/78. The Laṅkāvatāra S, one of the most important of Mahāyāna Buddhist texts, was written around 300 CE. It is found in the Yogācāra canon, which emerged in the 5th century. This school stressed the need for calm (*śamatha*) as a foundation for the development of insight wisdom. The Yogācāra was an important influence in the rise of later Mahāyāna traditions in Tibet and China where the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra* was very popular.

<sup>15</sup> For further reading on the Mahāsaṅghika, see Williams & Tribe 2000:128-130.

has become a marketable commodity—and Buddhist rituals and books can be very expensive—let the buyer beware! Many “sutras” are not Buddha Word and most Buddhist books are more about the writer than about Buddhism—of course, it is all right if you wish to read such books simply for what they are.

It is fair to say that whenever we write down our ideas or speak about them, it is always to sell or smuggle our biases into the minds of the reader or the audience. Very often, our purpose is to spread ourselves rather than the truth.<sup>16</sup> The saccharin-sweet “only-my-God-is-true” evangelists are perhaps the best (or worst) example of such self-replication. A current example is Paul Hattaway’s *Peoples of the Buddhist World* (Carlisle: Piquant Editions, 2004), published by one of the leaders of this new evangelical assault on Buddhism. **Allen Carr**, in his book review (entitled “Planning the Demise of Buddhism,” posted on LankaWeb, describes Hattaway’s book as follows:

The book’s 453 pages offer missionaries and interested Christians a complete profile of 316 Buddhist ethnic and linguistic groups in Asia, from the Nyenpa of central Bhutan to the Kui of northern Cambodia, from the Buriats of the Russian Far East to the Sinhalese of Sri Lanka. There is a detailed breakdown of the size of each group, how many call themselves Buddhists and how many actually know and practice it, which languages they speak, their strengths and how to overcome them, their weaknesses and how to take advantage of them, an overview of their history, their culture and the best ways to evangelize them. The book is filled with fascinating and beautiful color photos of all of these peoples, many of them little-known. It makes one very sad to think that these gentle, smiling, innocent folk are in now in the sights of worldly-wise missionaries determined to undermine their faith and destroy their ancient cultures.

(Source: <http://www.lankaweb.com/news/items08/010708-2.html>)<sup>17</sup>

What is of greater interest to me is something I have known for some years now, that is, *that some evangelists have taken up a serious study of Buddhism in a systematic manner*. Knowing that they have consistently failed to make any significant headway to destroy Buddhism from the outside, they are now planning to sabotage it *from the inside!* Sadly, they will find a lot of skeletons in the Buddhist closet, but hopefully they would not miss the real family heirloom and so become true heirs of the Dharma, since those come really close to the true light of the Dharma are better warmed and see all the clearer by it. Carr reports on the subterfuge plans of the evangelists, thus:

The Central Asia Fellowship is geared specifically to spreading the Gospel amongst Tibetans. The Overseas Missionary Fellowship is “an acknowledged authority on Buddhism” and “is available to conduct training sessions and seminars, give presentations and speak on how Christians can work effectively in the Buddhist world.” The Sunrise Centre for Buddhist Studies [Sierra Madre, California] and the South Asia Network [Artesia, California] are both on-line communities providing missionaries with detailed, accurate and up-to-date information useful for evangelizing Buddhists. Make no mistake, these are not small ad-hoc groups. They are large, well-financed, superbly run organizations staffed by highly motivated and totally dedicated people and they are in it for the long haul.

(Allen Carr, LankaWeb, July 1, 2008)<sup>18</sup>

The history of Christian attempts to evangelize the Buddhists in their native lands is a record of consistent and glorious failure. The reason for their failure is very simple: the native Buddhists are a very happy people with a culture even more ancient than the Bible itself. In an open society where Buddhism is found alongside other religions, and where there is full religious freedom, and a good level of literacy, a

<sup>16</sup> On the fascinating subject of self-replication, see **Memes** = SD 26.3.

<sup>17</sup> Also at <http://www.christianaggression.org/>; for dealing with evangelist aggression, see CrisadeWatch: <http://www.crusadewatch.org/index>.

<sup>18</sup> See <http://www.lankaweb.com/news/items08/010708-2.html> or <http://www.buddhistchannel.tv/index.php?id=10.6724.0.0.1.0>.

significant percentage of society would often be attracted to Buddhism, especially to its tolerant doctrines and self-liberating meditation.<sup>19</sup>

**3.4.2 The Buddha's prophecies.** Buddhism has faced persecutions ever since its early days in India. In the early suttas, the Buddha often warns against “future dangers” (*anāgata, bhaya*), but which *never* speak of the teaching being destroyed by external forces, or perhaps did not consider such physical destruction or social deprivation as bad as *the internal decay* of the monastic sangha itself. A significant number of suttas attest to how *internal decay is the surest way for the decline of the teaching*.<sup>20</sup>

**The Saddhamma Paṭirūpaka Sutta** (S 16.13/2:223-225) is perhaps the most important of the Buddha's warning against internal decay. It is given in Anāthapiṇḍaka's Park in Jetavana at Sāvattḥī where the Buddha addresses Mahā Kassapa's concern regarding the decline of the Dharma:

Venerable sir, what is the reason, what is the cause, that formerly there were fewer training-rules but more monks were established in final knowledge (aññā), while now there are more training-rules but fewer monks are established in final knowledge [become arhats]?

That's the way it is, Kassapa....

Kassapa, just as gold does not disappear so long as counterfeit gold has not arisen in the world, even so, the True Dharma does not disappear so long as a counterfeit Dharma does not arise in the world. But when a counterfeit Dharma has arisen in the world, then the True Dharma disappears.

It is not the earth element, Kassapa, that causes the True Dharma to disappear, nor the water element, nor the fire element, nor the air element. **It is the spiritually empty people (mogha,-purisa) who arise right here (in this religion) who cause the True Dharma to disappear.**

(S 2:223 f, abridged)

This same question about training-rules and attainment is asked by the monk **Bhaddāli** (M 1:445 f.) to which the Buddha replies that the Teacher does not introduce the training-rules or code of conduct until “certain bases for taints become manifest here in the Sangha,” that is, to say, until the Sangha has reached the peak of worldly gain, the peak of fame, the peak of learning, the peak of long-standing renown (M 1:446). The Buddha gives a similar but shorter reply to Sāriputta's request that the Buddha introduce the training-rules (V 3:8).<sup>21</sup>

The Commentary to **the Saddhamma Paṭirūpaka Sutta** (SA 2:201 f) explains that there are two counterfeit forms of the True Dharma (*saddhamma, paṭirūpaka*): one with respect to **attainment** (*adhigama*), the other with respect to **learning** (*pariyatti*). The former are the 10 corruptions of insight knowledge, namely, with regards to illumination, knowledge, zest, calm, bliss, resolution, exertion, assurance, equanimity and attachment, explained in the Visuddhi, magga (Vism 20.105-128/633-638).

The latter counterfeit form—that of learning—comprises texts other than the Buddha Word that is authorized at the three Buddhist Councils, with the exception of these five topics of discussion (*kathā, vatthu*), that is, on the elements, on mental objects, on foulness, on the bases of knowledge, and on the casket of true knowledge.<sup>22</sup> The counterfeit texts, according to the Commentary, include the following: the Secret Vinaya (*gūḷha, vinaya*), the Secret Vessantara, the Secret Mah'osadha, the Vaṇṇa Piṭaka, the Aṅgulimāla Piṭaka, the Raṭṭhapāla Gajjita, the Ālavaka Gajjita and the Vedalla Piṭaka.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>19</sup> See eg <http://au.christiantoday.com/article/teachings-of-some-christian-churches-drive-some-converts-to-buddhism/2868.htm>.

<sup>20</sup> Interestingly, the early suttas speak only of “future dangers (or fears)” (*anāgata, bhaya*), and not of a “Dharma-ending age,” an idea which was developed in post-Buddha times and took more significance in the Buddhisms of east Asia.

<sup>21</sup> See Piya Tan 2002b 5:27.

<sup>22</sup> *Pañca kathā, vatthu: dhātu, kathā ārammaṇa, kathā asubha, kathā, ñāṇa, vatthu, kathā vijjā, karaṇḍa, kathā.* (SA 2:201).

<sup>23</sup> An attempt to identify the texts cited by the Saṃyutta Commentary is made in the 14<sup>th</sup> century work, *Nikāya, saṅgraha*, discussed in Adikaram, *Early History of Buddhism in Ceylon*, pp. 99-100. The *Nikāya, saṅgraha* assigns

**The Porāṇa Ṭikā** on the Commentary glosses that **the “Vedalla Piṭaka”** is the Vetula Piṭaka, that some say was brought up from the abodes of the nagas [alluding to Nāgārjuna and the Prajñā, pāramitā Śūtras]; others say it consists of what was spoken in debates (*vāda, bhāsita*).

The Saddhamma Paṭirūpaka Sutta continues with the Buddha saying:

The True Dharma does not disappear all at once in the way a ship sinks. There are, Kassapa, five detrimental things that lead to decay and disappearance of the True Dharma. Here the monks, nuns, laymen and laywomen dwell without reverence and deference towards the Teacher, towards the Dharma, towards the Sangha, towards the training, towards concentration.

These five things, Kassapa, lead to the longevity of the True Dharma, to its non-decay and non-disappearance. Here the monks, nuns, laymen and laywomen dwell with reverence and deference towards the Teacher, toward the Dharma, towards the Sangha, towards the training, towards concentration. (S 2:225, abridged)<sup>24</sup>

### **3.4.3 The Mahāyāna cuckoo.**

3.4.3.1 MAHĀYĀNA IDEOLOGY. The “future dangers (or fears)” (*anāgata, bhaya*) which the Buddha often warns of in the early suttas could be said to have actually risen within centuries of his passing—with the rise of *the Mahāyāna ideology*. Please note that by the phrase, “the Mahāyāna ideology,” I am not referring to Mahāyāna as a whole, but to the political pitching of one Buddhist notion against another, or a revisionism that threatens to uproot early Buddhism or deny it altogether. The point is that *the arhats and the bodhisattvas do not quarrel: it is the unawakened who are quarrelling!* [2.6.4.3]

Ironically, the fields of Buddhist studies, such as Buddhology (or even Buddhist archaeology or philology), form such fertile fields for academic research that scholars, true to their profession, have since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, been digging (literally and academically) closer to early Buddhism. We are progressively better informed of early Buddhism by every new generation of Buddhist scholars and scholars of Buddhism. Old hidden cupboards and caches are opened and cleared, ancient testaments discovered, giving clearer details of forgotten or missed family histories. Most interestingly, we now have a better idea of probably how the minds of ancient Buddhist masters and movers worked.

3.4.3.2 THE NEED TO PUBLISH. <sup>25</sup>One such “religious detective” work is **Joseph Walser’s** *Nāgārjuna in Context* (2005), whose thesis is that *in religion, doctrine and social contexts are intimately interlinked*. Walser here examines Nāgārjuna’s ideas and works, in terms of “just how is it that something that was written 1800 years ago in Brahmi script on palm-leaf parchment, sits today in Devanagari script in a library in New York City?”

Walser first discusses not only on the *form* of Nāgārjuna’s writing, but also *the social factors* necessary for its *reproduction* (or meme-like self-replication). Anyone can write anything they want, but not everything is reproduced. “What was it in Nāgārjuna’s writing that made it worthy of reproduction?” asks Walser. Nāgārjuna, for example, could have written a book on Sāriputta’s purported liking for a certain kind of Indian cookie—which only may raise a few eyebrows, but stop at that. In other words, whether one writes convincingly or with virtuosity, is only “half the battle” of getting published, that is, replicated. The other half concerns the acceptability of that writing to the replicative apparatus of the institutional majority.

Walser’s second issue concerns a thesis of such scholars like Gregory Schopen that the Mahāyāna was a minority Buddhist movement, and that many of the early Mahāyānist monks resided in monasteries alongside non-Mahāyānists. To understand Nāgārjuna, we should first acknowledge that the Indian Mahāyāna was “not the publishing ‘fashion’ in any monastery until at least the fifth century.” We must, as

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each text to a different non-Theravādin school. The late date of this work, according to Bodhi, casts doubts on its reliability, and its method of identification is just too neat to be convincing. The Porāṇa Ṭikā’s comment on the Vedalla Piṭaka suggests it may be a collection of Mahāyāna śūtras. The Mahāyāna is referred to in Sri Lankan chronicles as the Vetullavāda (Skt Vaitulyavāda); see Rahula, *History of Buddhism in Ceylon*, 1956:87-90. (S:B 808 n312)

<sup>24</sup> See further **The Dharma-ending Age** = SD 6.10.

<sup>25</sup> For a full report or MP3 talk of which this section only mentions in passing, see Joseph Walser 2006.

such, examine what Mahāyāna thinkers like Nāgārjuna had to do to get published, that is, how his treatise was either written down and reproduced on parchment, or memorized and replicated orally.

3.4.3.3 MAKING OURSELVES HEARD. In his book, Walser re-examines several sections of Nāgārjuna's *Mūla, madhyamaka Kārikā*. First, he examines how Nāgārjuna attacked the Sarvāstivādins, and says, "We can tentatively assume that Nāgārjuna was *not* writing in a Sārvāstivādin monastery," because Nāgārjuna was keenly aware of his audience. Then he goes on to show how Nāgārjuna was more accommodating when discussing ideas of the Mahāsaṅghikas—this probably shows that he might be residing in a Mahāsaṅghika monastery and might himself be a Mahāsaṅghika. Walser however speculates the possibility of Nāgārjuna's allegiances to the Saṃmitīyas and/or the Puṅgalavādins. Nāgārjuna often made use of very specific literary, linguistic, philosophical strategies that were supportive of them.

This short excerpt from Walser's book gives us some idea of his *Nāgārjuna in Context*:

The European and Asian species of cuckoo are what is known as "brood parasites." The female lays her eggs in the nests of other birds, who, in turn, raise her chicks as their own. A successful cuckoo can pass its eggs off as those of another species so that the other species will provide the labor and material resources necessary to raise the young to adulthood.

The simple fact that Mahāyānists were writing and copying unsanctioned scripture was potentially divisive. To alleviate tensions they would have had to convince the readers that their texts were *buddhavacana*, or "word of the Buddha." Mahāyānists employed a strategy similar to the cuckoo, by presenting their texts and ideas as "word of the Buddha." If the Mahāyānists could succeed in passing their *sūtras* off as "word of the Buddha," the host monastery would be obligated to preserve and reproduce Mahāyāna texts in perpetuity just as they would any other *buddhavacana* text.

This chapter examines two strategies used by Mahāyānists to evoke the authority of "word of the Buddha" for their texts. The first strategy is simply a type of camouflage, presenting Mahāyāna texts so as to fit the description of *buddhavacana* texts. The second strategy is to evoke the authority of buddhavacana texts through the use of allusion. This second strategy is more sophisticated than the first and, like the strategy of the cuckoo bird, aims at a more pervasive transformation of the reading practices of the host monastery to better accommodate the interests of the newcomer. (Walser 2005: 153; reparagraphed & emphases added)

### **3.4.4 How to meet the Buddha**

3.4.4.1 SHIFT IN THE MEDITATION FOCUS. The early Indian Buddhist texts, such as the Pali Tipiṭaka, directly or indirectly record and recount instructions for meditation (*bhāvanā*), that is, mental cultivation, for the purpose of spiritual liberation. The texts are like musical scores of ancient music carefully interpreted by virtuosi in the form of meditation teachers and masters. Although we see some latitude in techniques—such as whether we should focus on calmness, *samatha* (*zhǐ* 止), or on insight, *vipassanā* (*guān* 觀), or combine them—the goal is always the same: spiritual liberation by ending rebirth.

Numerous suttas record the Buddha's admonition on how to properly attend to sense-experiences during meditation. The best known pericope (stock passage) of this runs thus:

When he cognizes a mind-object with the mind, **he grasps neither its sign nor its detail.**

So long he dwells unrestrained in that mind-faculty, evil, unwholesome states of covetousness and displeasure might overwhelm him, to that extent, he therefore keeps himself restrained.

He practises the restraint of it. He guards the restraint of the mind-faculty, he commits himself to the restraint of the mind-faculty.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>26</sup> D 2.64/1:70, 10.2.2/1:207, 33.1.11(10)/3:225; M 27.15/1:180, 33.20/1:223, 38.35/1:269, 51.16/1:346, 53.8/1:355, 94.18/2:162, 101.33/2:226; S 35.120/4:104, 35.239/4:176; A 3.16/1:113, 4.14/2:16, 4.37/2:39, 4.164/2:152 (×4), 4.198.11/2:210, 5.76.12/3:99 f, 5.140.11/3:163, 10.99.6/5:206, 11.18.23/5:351. For a detailed analysis, see Vism 1.53-69/20-22. For a study, see SD 19.14.



The crux of such a pericope is that any sense-experience other than the meditation object (eg the breath) should be regarded as being “mind-made” or as being impermanent, and let go of, or be simply disregarded as not-self, so that the mind grows more focussed until it attains samadhi or dhyana, or the mind could be stilled first, and in that clear stillness in due course we reflect it as being impermanent, and as such unsatisfactory and without an abiding entity.

The early Chinese Buddhists might or might not have been aware of such meditation texts and techniques. Or, perhaps the kind of meditation methods that reached China were more ritualistic and more elaborate (with visualizations, mudras, mantras etc), unlike the simpler and more effective ones taught in the early Indian texts. Anyway, Buddhist meditation methods were in due course often sinicized. **The Pratyutpanna Samādhi Sūtra** (*Bānzhōu sānmèi jīng* 般舟三昧经), or Pratyutpanna Sūtra, for short,<sup>27</sup> for example, describes austere and rigorous Buddha-recollection (*Buddhānusmṛti*) practices which leads to a vision or a dream of the Buddha, in this case, the Buddha Amitāyus in his Pure Land of Sukhāvati in the west.<sup>28</sup>

3.4.4.2 *VATICINIUM EX EVENTU*. The Pratyutpanna Sūtra opens with the Buddha sitting before a group of bodhisattvas and monks, the most important of whom are 500 householder bodhisattvas led by Bhadrāpāla, to whom the sutra is addressed. Typical of a Mahāyāna work, the sutra states how, after circulating for a short period, it would be hidden in a cave and re-discovered in the future during the Dharma-ending age (Harrison 1978: 57). The 500 lay bodhisattvas then request the Buddha that they would like to be re-incarnated as the revealers and propagators of this text in that future time. (Try to imagine if you were recording this sutra, how would you do it?) Thus far, the lay origin of the text is apparent.

The Pratyutpanna Sūtra declares itself to be a “buried text” or *terma*, recovered from an underground hiding place: “Forty years after the Buddha’s Parinirvāṇa, the sūtra is copied down, placed in a casket, and buried, eventually to be rediscovered in the ‘Last Age’ and propagated anew by a faithful core of five hundred Buddhists....”<sup>29</sup> The sutra then characteristically goes on to say how in the future, monks will denounce it as being a false text—ironically echoing the sentiments of early texts such as **the Anāgata,-bhaya Sutta 3** (A 5.79; S 20.7), that says:

They will not listen to the Buddha Word, neither study nor master them; instead they will listen to and master “discourses that are poetry composed by poets, beautiful in word and phrase, composed by outsiders, spoken by their disciples.

(A 5.79.5/3:107 = S 20.7.6/2:267) = SD 1.10(3.3)

Here, the Sutra is interesting for at least two reasons: it uses *reverse psychology* (turning the canonical prophecy of the Buddha himself on its head by effectively suggesting that it is false), and it appeals to a *vaticinium ex eventu* argument.<sup>30</sup> Such a text clearly shows the writer of the Pratyutpanna Sūtra was aware of the early Buddhist text (either in Pali or some other ancient Indian language).

<sup>27</sup> Often prefixed with *Fóshuō* 佛说 + *Bānzhōu sānmèi jīng*, or briefly, **Pratyutpanna Sūtra**, “The Present (Buddha) Sutra,” or fully, **Pratyutpanna, buddha, saṃmukhāvasthita, samādhi Sūtra**, “The Samadhi of Direct Encounter with the Buddhas of the Present,” is an early Mahayana text, which probably originated around 1st cent BCE in Gandhara (northern Pakistan & eastern Afghanistan). Four extant Chinese versions are at T416-T419, the subject of an extended discussion by **Paul Harrison** (1990), who tr the Tib version, and summarized by **Robert Sharf** in his tr of the *Treasure Store Treatise* (2002: 315) T417 and T418 were first tr into Chinese by the Kushan Buddhist monk Loka,ṣema (Zhīlólújiāchèn 支婁迦讖 2<sup>nd</sup> cent) btw 178 and 189 CE, at the Han capital of Luòyáng. This tr, together with that of the Prajñā, pāramitā Sūtra, are amongst the earliest historically datable texts of the Mahāyāna. The Pratyutpanna Sūtra contains the first known mentions of the Buddha Amitābha and his Pure Land, said to be the origin of Pure Land practice in China. See also Harrison 1978 & Paul Williams 1989: 23 f, 220-223.

<sup>28</sup> See Harrison, “Buddhānusmṛti in the Pratyutpanna-Buddha-saṃmukhāvasthita-samādhi-Sūtra,” 1978: 38.

<sup>29</sup> Harrison 1978: 57 n22; see also Buswell 1990: 20 f.

<sup>30</sup> *Vaticinium ex eventu*, Lat meaning “prophecy after the event,” ie postdiction, post-shadowing, retroactive clairvoyance, or prediction after the fact, as an effect of hindsight bias (the inclination to see events that have occurred as more predictable than they in fact were before they took place) that explains claimed predictions of significant events, such as plane crashes and natural disasters. Religious critics, using this argument, claim that many biblical

3.4.4.3 MEETING THE BUDDHA. As one of the earliest Indian sutras to be translated in China, the Pratyutpanna Sūtra shows remarkable affinity with the teaching of early Buddhist meditation, especially that of the recollection of the Buddha (*buddhānussati*).<sup>31</sup> The sutra first instructs the meditator to lead a life of strict moral virtue. Then he should sit down in meditation and visualize the Tathagatas (note the plural) in all their beauty and glory, sitting on the Buddha-throne and teaching (Harrison 1978: 45).

Or, the meditator could choose to visualize a single Buddha, say, Amitāyus (that is, Amitābha), sitting in meditation for one day and night, for two, three, four, five six, or seven days and nights. If he concentrates on the Tathāgata Amitāyus with undistracted thought for seven days and nights, then when seven days and nights have elapsed he shall see the Lord, the Tathāgata Amitāyus. If he does not see that Lord by day, then in a dream while sleeping the face of the Lord... will appear. (Harrison 1978: 43)<sup>32</sup>



Having met the Buddha, the meditator then should worship him and receive teachings. Understandably, the Sutra was written at a time when *dreams and visions were believed to be real events*, or had real effects on one's waking life. The visionary or dreamer might then go on to write down his experiences or the "teachings" he had thus received as a "sutra." Experts in the psychology of dreams and auto-suggestion would be in a better position to provide an interesting analysis of such developments.<sup>33</sup>

#### 3.4.4.4 Huiyuǎn (334-416)

3.4.4.4 HUIYUǎN ATTEMPTS TO MEET THE BUDDHA. In 402, the first Pure Land school (*jìngtǔzōng* 淨土宗) patriarch, **Huiyuǎn** 慧遠 (334-416) [2.3.3],<sup>34</sup> and 123 other monastics and lay followers, made a mutual vow or solemn covenant before the statue of Amitābha at Lúshān 廬山 temple,<sup>35</sup> that they would aspire to be reborn in Sukhāvati, the western paradise of Amitābha. Whoever reached it first, should not

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prophecies (and similar prophecies in other religions) that may appear to have come true were in fact written after the events supposedly predicted, or that their text or interpretation were modified after the event to fit the facts as they occurred. See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Postdiction> & [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hindsight\\_bias](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hindsight_bias).

<sup>31</sup> See *Buddhānussati* = SD 15.7.

<sup>32</sup> Zhìyǐ's *Móhē zhǐguān* 摩訶止觀 ("The great calm and insight," T1911.46.1a-140c) prescribes a more gruelling process: after initial purification and consecration, the devotee should repair to a specially assembled room with an Amitābha image in the centre, and was to circumambulate it for full 90 days without stopping, sitting or sleeping (*Dictionary of Buddhism* 2003: 228).

<sup>33</sup> Étienne Lamotte proposes that this is *de l'autosuggestion pure* (quoted by Paul Williams 1989:222). In Japanese Jōdo Shin tradition, the *Shinran muki* and the *Godenshō* by Kakunyo report that on the 95<sup>th</sup> day of Shinran's 100-day retreat in the Rokkakudō, Kannon appeared to him in a dream and said, "If the believer, because of the fruition of karma, is driven by sexual desire, | Then I shall take on the body of a beautiful woman to be ravished by him. | Throughout his entire life I shall adorn him well, | And at death I shall lead him to birth in Pure Land." (Dobbins 1989:23 f). It was this dream that led Shinran to give up celibacy and marry. For a complete story, see the Edo-period Takada-ha biography, *Shinran Shōnin shōtoden* (1715): see Alfred Bloom, *The Life of Shinran Shōnin*, Leiden, 1968:12 f.

<sup>34</sup> As mentioned earlier [2.3.3], the most prominent pupil of Dào'ān 道安 (314-385). Interestingly, Huiyuǎn was also the first Chinese monk to have openly stressed on the importance of dhyana in meditation (Zürcher 1959: 222 f). For a text on his biography, see Zürcher 1972: 244 f & Tsukamoto 1985: 844 ff. See *Shambhala Dictionary of Buddhism and Zen*, sv Hui-yüan. For a popular version of his life, see <http://www.us.tzuchi.org/global/home.nsf/c5fcba97a39a4e6a852570f30006b142/0df3c755c14c6949852571d600-498db9>.

<sup>35</sup> Situated near Lake Poyang (*Póyáng hú* 鄱陽湖, the largest freshwater lake in China), south of the city of Jiūjiāng 九江 in Jiāngxī 江西, SE China. Huiyuǎn lived there for many years before his death.

leave the rest behind but help them across into that paradise.<sup>36</sup> In this connection, Buddhologist Erik Zürcher notes that Huiyuǎn's group, was "a religious counterpart of the cliques of gentry politicians who monopolized the top functions in a bureaucratic hierarchy."<sup>37</sup>

Huiyuǎn subsequently had doubts about his Pure Land aspirations, and it formed one of the topics in his 18 letters to Kumāra, jīva.<sup>38</sup> Although Huiyuǎn's difficulties were never resolved (Kumāra, jīva was not enthusiastic about the matter), he is fondly remembered posthumously as the first Pure Land patriarch. It was the second Pure Land patriarch, **Shàndào** 善導 (613-681), who systematized the Pure Land school. An influential writer of Pure Land texts, he became prominent in China, Korea, Vietnam and Japan. His writings had a strong influence on later Pure Land masters such as Hōnen and Shinran in Japan.<sup>39</sup>

3.4.4.5 REASONS FOR THE RISE OF PURE LAND BUDDHISM. The majority of Mahayana Buddhists today are Pure Land believers. There are two main reasons for this:

- (1) pioneer and missionary work of monastics like Taixu; and
- (2) the simplicity and immediacy of Pure Land teachings.

**(1) A HUMANISTIC BUDDHISM.** **Tàixū** 太虛 (1889-1947) was the remarkable Chinese Buddhist monk who envisioned a "humanistic Buddhism" (*rénshēng fójiào* 人生佛教) to carry out a series of Buddhist reforms.<sup>40</sup> Two events strongly motivated Taixu's reformist ideas:

- (a) the 1911 revolution that ended imperialism and ushered in the republic of China (1911-1949);
- (b) the disunity and worldliness of the Sangha; and the Christian evangelist threat. [6.3].

**(2) THE SIMPLICITY OF PURE LAND BUDDHISM.** Pure Land Buddhism's appeal to the Chinese masses will be discussed under two headings: historical reasons and social reasons, but the two overlap. **Historically**, Pure Land Buddhism arose during the later weakening days of the Táng empire, troubled by the Ān Lùshān rebellion (755-763) [5.2.3.4], then a severe and widespread drought and famine in the 870s, that lead to widespread popular rebellion, especially the one led by Huáng Cháo. It weakened the Táng forces so badly that in 907, the renegade Táng military governor, Zhū Quánzhōng 朱全忠, was able to topple the Táng government and proclaim his own dynasty, the Later Liáng dynasty (Hòu Liáng 後梁 907-923) [7.4.1.4].

The **social reasons** for the rise of Pure Land Buddhism in ancient China had to do with her socio-political conditions. An important result of such widespread natural disasters and social upheavals was the destruction of the social infrastructure on which institutional Buddhism depended for its existence. The grassroots Buddhists, especially those who depended on the guidance and support of institutional Buddhism, were at a loss, resulting in a pervading sense of uncertainty, pessimism, and religious escapism, which often characterize the aftermath of radical social changes or political traumas.<sup>41</sup>

Under such circumstances, the Chinese Buddhists found *the doctrine of karma* especially compelling, even attractive, to their minds. On the individual level, there was a fear of the "fallen man" (Huiyuǎn was himself a strict moral disciplinarian),<sup>42</sup> and socially, there was the apprehension of a Dharma-ending age

<sup>36</sup> Zürcher 1959: 128, 219-223, 244 f (Gāosēng zhuàn), 406 n57.

<sup>37</sup> Zürcher, *Buddhist Conquest of China*, 1959: 220; see also 219-223.

<sup>38</sup> Zürcher 1959: 226-229.

<sup>39</sup> For a popular account of his life: <http://www12.canvas.ne.jp/horai/shan-tao.htm>; see also [http://Buddhism.2be.net/Category:Patriarchs\\_of\\_the\\_Chinese\\_Pure\\_Land\\_School](http://Buddhism.2be.net/Category:Patriarchs_of_the_Chinese_Pure_Land_School)

<sup>40</sup> CHAN Wing-tsit, *Religious Trends in Modern China*, NY: Columbia Univ Press, 1953:56. Keown, *Dictionary of Buddhism*, sv T'ai-hsü.

<sup>41</sup> A similar ambience pervaded Kamakura Japan, during which time we see the rise of "new religions," *Shinshū-kyō* 新宗教: see eg Piyasilo, *Nichiren*, 1988d. It was during the Kamakura period that Pure Land (Jingtǔ jiào 淨土教 Jap: *Jōdokyō*), was introduced into Japan.

<sup>42</sup> The "fallen man" is the antithesis (opposite) of the "true man" (P *sappurisa*; Skt *satpuruṣa*; Daoist: *zhēnrén* 真人; Zhuāngzi: *jūnzi* 君子) [2.3.8.1]. According to the *Gāosēng zhuàn* (T50.2059.361.2-4), Huiyuǎn, when he fell very ill refused to take any medicinal beverage with alcohol in it (such as fermented soy juice and rice wine), and when he was offered a mixture of honey and water, he asked the Vinaya master to look up in the scripture if this was allowable, but midway he passed away at 83 (Zürcher 1959: 253).

(*mòfǎ* 末法).<sup>43</sup> Texts such as the Pratyutpanna Sūtra [3.4.4.3] give instructions on how to “meet” the Buddha here and now (Skt *pratyutpanna*). Since it is difficult to meet a true sage in ancient China, Huìyuǎn and others like him, hoped to meet them in Amitābha’s Pure Land after death.<sup>44</sup> Huìyuǎn’s vision of Pure Land, as described in his biography, was clearly influenced by his early knowledge of the Taoist paradise [2.3.3.2], but also showed a clear awareness that rebirth in the Buddha’s Pure Land is for facilitating the attaining of nirvana (Zürcher 1972: 245).

For the average lay devotee, faith in Amitābha Buddha, simply entails that he faithfully (with a mind visualizing the Buddha) recites “Homage to Amitābha Buddha!” (*Námó Āmítuó Fó* 南無阿彌陀佛, Skt *namo Amitābhāya Buddhāya*), that is, the *niànfó* 念佛 or *Buddhānussati*.<sup>45</sup> *Merely by the grace of these words through his faith*, he would overcome worldly problems and at the end of this life, he would be reborn in Pure Land. This point is remarkable: Buddhists have no need for Lutheranism or its likes, for we have our homegrown “grace through faith” doctrine, but one that is mercifully free from theological triumphalism, religious intolerance and psychological problems!

The Pure Land has another attraction for the traditional Chinese: *those reborn in the Pure Land become immortal*. What the Daoists have been seeking for ages—longevity—is realized in Pure Land! The well known Pure Land scholar-monk and patriarch, **Tánluán** 曇鸞 (476-542),<sup>46</sup> having fallen seriously ill, began to wonder about his mortality, and wandered south in quest of Daoist alchemical techniques to attain a long life so that he could devote himself to Dharma study! His quest, however, ended when he met the north-Indian scholar-monk, **Bodhi,ruci** (*Pútiliúzhī* 菩提流支 6<sup>th</sup> cent) [2.3.3.2], around 530, who told him, “By practising Daoism you may prolong your life beyond the fixed limit, but like other people you must meet death sooner or later...” and then taught him about Amitāyus (the Buddha of Boundless Life, another name for Amitābha) and eternal life in his Pure Land.<sup>47</sup> [7.5.1.3]

— 080603; 081028; 091212; 100618; 120107; 121108 —

<sup>43</sup> See **Dharma-ending Age** = SD 1.10 & Piyasilo 1988d: 57 f, 147 f (index sv).

<sup>44</sup> See Tsukamoto 1985: 2, 845 f. We see a similar in Neo-Daoism, of posthumously living in harmony with nature (Liebenthal 1955: 50 f).

<sup>45</sup> The China vb *niàn* 念 has two senses: (1) think of, miss (someone), recollect; (2) read aloud, chant; and both. In early Buddhism, or ancient China, or for meditators, the former meaning is more common, but in later times or on a popular level, as in Pure Land Buddhism, the latter sense applies. See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nembutsu>.

<sup>46</sup> See [http://www.buddhism-dict.net/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?66.xml+id\('b66c7-9e1e'\)](http://www.buddhism-dict.net/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?66.xml+id('b66c7-9e1e')) & <http://www.answers.com/-topic/t-an-luan>.

<sup>47</sup> See Matsumoto 1986: 37.