

DRESSED FOR SUCCESS
THE MONK KĀŚYAPA AND STRATEGIES OF LEGITIMATION
IN EARLIER MAHĀYĀNA BUDDHIST SCRIPTURES*

BY

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One challenge faced by the authors of the first Mahāyāna scriptures is the same as that faced by anyone who seeks to expand the limits of a canon. With what we might term the psychological interests of orthodoxy in mind, they had among other things to convince their audience that their innovations were fundamentally no innovations at all, and thus that in fact their presentation of new scriptures, full of new ideas, in no way really represented any actual expansion of the established and accepted canon. The new, then, must appear as the genuinely real old. It is well known that one of the strategies that the authors of Mahāyāna scriptures employed in this effort to persuade their audience of the continuity and coherence of their compositions with the prevailing corpus of scripture was to place the newly composed discourses in a familiar setting. At least in the case of the earlier Mahāyāna scriptures now accessible to us, those originating in perhaps the first couple of centuries

* This paper is partially based on materials I originally studied in Silk 1994: 52-68, but here greatly revised and expanded. I owe my thanks for the kind suggestions offered by Jan Nattier and, especially, Koichi Shinohara. At the last minute, a number of careless errors were pointed out to me by Shayne Clarke, to whom go my deep thanks.

After writing this paper, I learned from its author of Deeg 1999. Although we seem to have touched upon some similar ideas, as is natural when dealing with many identical sources, Deeg's extremely interesting study engages essentially different questions from those addressed in the present paper. His main concern, as his title shows, is the apocalyptic and the messianic in Indian Buddhism, with particular attention to Kāśyapa and the advent of Maitreya. I very much hope, for this reason, that Deeg may be persuaded to present his results in English in the near future.

Between the completion of this paper and its publication, an abbreviated Japanese version appeared as Silk 2002b.

of the Common Era,¹ the setting is always one familiar from the earlier literature, and much of the audience and many of the interlocutors the same.² Needless to say, the Buddha Śākyamuni stands in the center, preaching at such well-known sites as Śrāvastī or Rājagṛha, accompanied by disciples such as Śāriputra, Mahāmaudgalyāyana, Ānanda, and Subhūti. The placement of a new discourse in familiar surroundings signals the audience that it should attribute to this material the same authority and authenticity it attributes to the previously familiar discourses set in the same environment. The new discourse, preached by the same Buddha at the same spots and to, at least in part, the same audience, is therefore just as true and valid as the teachings already familiar to the audience.³

In fact, however, something more is also going on here. The inhabitants of the earlier Buddhist literary tradition are, as it were, co-opted by the rhetoricians of the Mahāyāna scriptures, not only to lend authority to their scriptures, but also to illustrate the superiority of those scriptures over the old, superseded revelation. Sometimes this process is quite transparent, as when the eminent monk Śāriputra is made to play the fool in texts such as the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa*, or when in its fourth chapter the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* has the great disciples Subhūti, Mahākātyāyana, Mahākāśyapa, and Mahāmaudgalyāyana confess their limited and ultimately incorrect understanding of the Buddha's earlier teachings. Not only are Mahāyāna scriptures the authentic, genuine preaching of the Buddha, but in reality they are more true, more authentic and more genuine than the already accepted scriptures known to and acknowledged by all.

¹ This is not to say that the versions of these scriptures to which we now have access date to this period, which clearly they do not. However, the patterns to which I refer in the following are so widespread and fundamental in the very structure of the scriptures that it seems inconceivable that they did not form part of the primitive scriptures, even if, as is virtually certain, the shapes in which we have such scriptures today are in many respects different from their "original" forms.

² It is really only when we reach a significantly later period that we find drastically different settings, as for instance in some tantric literature.

³ In this regard, however, also compare the observations in Schopen 1997, whose discoveries demonstrate, among other things, that the use of familiar locations to inspire confidence seems not to have been limited to Mahāyāna literature.

While no doubt it will remain forever impossible to explicate entirely the process and logic which guided the composition of the Mahāyāna scriptures, in some cases it may indeed be reasonable to suggest some rationale for the development of certain features of the texts. From this perspective, I intend to offer here an experimental response to just one among a large number of possible questions, namely: Why is the monk Kāśyapa such a prominent interlocutory figure in a significant number of Mahāyāna scriptures?

The hypothesis I will explore is this: Kāśyapa is not only a representative of the old community of close personal disciples of the Buddha (*śrāvakaśaṅgha*); he also provides an additional crucial legitimizing link in the chain of Mahāyāna scriptural revelation. If one goal of the authors of the Mahāyāna scriptures was to assure their literary products not only a hearing but a respectful hearing which recognized them as bearers of sacred — and indeed superior and surpassing — authority, still in the very first place those authors had to negotiate for their compositions simple authority and legitimacy itself. One strategy through which some authors sought to obtain that recognition of authority was by forging a connection between Śākyamuni Buddha, and his teaching, and the future Buddha Maitreya, whose preaching and dispensation will of course also be fully authentic and authoritative. The future appearance of this Buddha in our world is an idea which was apparently widely accepted among Buddhists, Mahāyānist as well as non-Mahāyānist,⁴ and it was not difficult to link the already established authority of Śākyamuni and Maitreya through a messenger. That messenger as the living link between acknowledged sources of authority himself naturally came to partake in their authority (although his authority has other motivations as well), and his presence could thus assume a manifold meaning. The messenger between Śākyamuni and Maitreya is none other than (Mahā-) Kāśyapa,⁵ who is at once not only the Buddha Śākyamuni's

⁴ See Lamotte 1958: 777.

⁵ Although I have not explored this hypothesis in systematic detail, it is my impression that the element Mahā° may act as a sort of honorific prefix. The Buddha does not appear to call Kāśyapa “Mahākāśyapa” in direct speech, although the narrative text framing the Buddha's words may do so. This hypothesis, however, is complicated by the fact that some texts do seem to have contrary examples. In one Chinese translation of the *Kāśyapaparivarta*, for instance, the Buddha is made to use the form Dajiashe 大迦葉 in

heir, legal and otherwise, but who is especially and particularly deputed by Śākyamuni to await Maitreya, and convey to him Śākyamuni's blessings. By placing Kāśyapa in the position of interlocutor in Mahāyāna scriptures the authors appropriate for their texts the legitimacy and authority of the teaching that Śākyamuni has sent forward in time in the care of Kāśyapa.

The authors of the Mahāyāna scriptures began with a set of "facts": the teaching of Śākyamuni theretofore known was factually accepted (by Buddhists) as authoritative and reliable, and the teaching which was to come from the future Buddha Maitreya would likewise be authoritative and reliable.⁶ By tapping into the very conduit through which flowed the current of authority between these two authoritative teachings, the authors of the Mahāyāna scriptures could appropriate for their own scriptural compositions the authority, approval and validation coursing from Śākyamuni to Maitreya. The Mahāyāna teachings they present, then, are not authorized and validated solely by the rhetorical device of setting the presentation of those teachings at a spot familiar from old Buddhism, nor only by filling the stage with a cast of familiar players. Something more is going on with the choice of Kāśyapa to play one of the lead roles in these Mahāyāna scriptural dramas.⁷

In order to appreciate another aspect of the choice of Kāśyapa as interlocutor, we must recognize an often overlooked characteristic of some varieties of early Mahāyāna Buddhism, namely, its conservatism.

direct address (§§ 96, 98, 105, 107, 111, 121, 134, 140). However, all other versions (Sanskrit, Tibetan, other Chinese translations) have here either Kāśyapa, or no equivalent. Therefore, this example is probably not entirely relevant. In the recently published Sanskrit fragments of the *Ajātaśatrukaukṛtyavinodana*, we indeed find Kāśyapa addressed by Ajātaśatru in direct speech with Mahākāśyapa (Harrison and Hartmann 2000: 182; No. 3, recto 3). But for Ajātaśatru to use the form and for the Buddha to do so are two entirely different things. Nevertheless, see the passages quoted below cited in nn. 16 and 33. The question requires reconsideration.

⁶ A similar appeal to authority is perhaps also behind the attribution of authorship of several fundamental treatises of the Yogācāra school to "Maitreya."

⁷ Jan Nattier has brought to my attention her observation that, with the exception of the *Kāśyapaparivarta* and *Ajātaśatrukaukṛtyavinodana*, Kāśyapa appears to be almost absent in the earlier strata of scriptures translated into Chinese. This absence may be significant, especially if it can be established that texts in which Kāśyapa plays a major role belong to (a) specific type(s) of scriptures. This question remains to be investigated.

This conservatism is evident particularly with regard to practice. The broad term “practice” includes many aspects, with the work of meditational cultivation, narrowly understood, being perhaps the most recognizably characteristic Buddhist monastic practice. Naturally, it should go without saying that Mahāyāna Buddhism is not a monolithic entity, nor does the scriptural literature of the Mahāyāna movement have a single character. Within the vast number of earlier Mahāyāna texts we find, to be sure, many which concentrate, even entirely, on issues such as the philosophical implications of emptiness, or the rarefied stages of mental development of the individual who devotes himself to meditational cultivation. But in a number of texts considerable attention is also paid to the behavior and deportment of the ideal individual, with special criticism reserved for those who fail to uphold the high standards expected of the genuine monk or bodhisattva. For the overall deportment of a monk is directly connected to his suitability to receive alms, that is, his ability to be an excellent field of merit (*puṇyakṣetra*), and his strict adherence to the norms of monastic discipline, and conversely his avoidance of being one who is ill-disciplined (*duḥśīla*). Naturally, such a concern with strict orthodoxy and orthopraxy is very often connected with its opposite, the ideology of the decline of the teaching, which in its turn is part and parcel of an entire set of mythologies of the decay of the Buddhist teaching.

The focus on behavior is often concentrated on basics. The list of the fundamental personal belongings which a monk may possess (*pariṣkāra*) corresponds quite precisely to another basic category, that of the four resources (*nīśraya*): robes, begging bowl, sleeping mat, and medications. The first three items here concern what we in the modern world likewise think of as fundamental requisites: clothing, food and shelter. And these same three again form the basic categories into which fall the dhuta ascetic purification practices (*dhūtaguṇa*), a list of generally speaking twelve or thirteen practices held to be particularly rigorous in nature, and which express the strictest stance toward ascetic practice within Buddhist ideology. While it is not altogether common for Mahāyāna sūtras to discuss the *dhūtaguṇas* as a whole, a number of texts do express their concern with the monk’s proper use of clothing, food and shelter. And among these, discussions of clothing, of the

monastic robe and its meaning, are central, symbolic and conceptually inclusive of the other items.⁸ As we will see, all of these factors work to form part of the background to the choice of Kāśyapa as interlocutor in Mahāyāna sūtras.

It is of course an unprovable assumption of the modern, post-Freudian scholar that the selection of Kāśyapa reflects a purposeful, even if sub-conscious, choice on the part of the authors of these scriptures, and that it is Kāśyapa's character and history, the associations that his presence and activity would evoke in the minds of the texts' authors and their audience, perhaps particularly with regard to his position in classical Buddhism, that led our Mahāyāna authors to choose him as their mouth-piece.⁹ A full study of the figure of Kāśyapa, while certain to illuminate diverse issues of Buddhist history, is not our current task.¹⁰ We may limit ourselves here to investigating those aspects of the persona of Kāśyapa most likely to shed light on his role in early Mahāyāna literature, and its relation to the earlier Buddhist tradition.

In the Nikāya / Āgama corpus, Kāśyapa is characterized as first among the disciples of the Buddha in practicing the dhuta ascetic purification practices (*dhūtaṅga*, *dhūtaguṇa*),¹¹ and even as the disciple who,

⁸ I have developed the ideas set forth summarily in these few paragraphs at greater length in a paper titled "Conservative Attitudes Toward Practice in Early Mahāyāna Buddhism," presented in May 2001 at the conference "Investigating the Early Mahāyāna," at Asilomar California. I hope to publish a full version in the near future.

⁹ Compare Dantinne 1991: 82, n. 81: "Mahākāśyapa, the guardian of brahmanical ideology and zealous practitioner of ascetic forest dwelling (*āraṇyaka*), plays the part of the propagator of 'progressive' tendencies which will play a more and more important role in the heart of the community immediately after the death of the Buddha."

¹⁰ For a few remarks on Kāśyapa, see Lamotte 1962: 149-150, n. 18, and the sources mentioned there, and Ray 1994: 105-118. A hagiography of Mahākassapa in Buddhaghosa's commentary to the *Aṅguttara-nikāya*, the *Manorathapūraṇī* (Walleser 1924: 161.17-183.17), has been translated in Oikawa 1987. Hecker 1987 is a composite story of the life of Mahākassapa based on Pāli sources (reprinted in Nyanaponika and Hecker 1997: 109-136). See also Nagasaki 1979; 1983.

¹¹ *Aṅguttara-nikāya* i.23,16-20 (I.XIV.1): *etad aggaṃ bhikkhave mama sāvakānaṃ bhikkhūnaṃ ... dhutavādānaṃ yad idam Mahākassapo*. Note that the PTS edition cites a Burmese variant for *dhutavādāna* as *dhūtaṅgadharāna* (but this reading does not appear in the edition published by the Dhammagiri-Pāli-Ganthamālā, which reproduces the text of the Sixth [Burmese] Council). See also the commentary *Manorathapūraṇī* (I.XIV.A.4; Walleser 1924: 161). In Chinese see the *Ekottarikāgama* 增一阿含經 T. 125 (II) 557b4, 8-9 (*juan* 3) 我聲聞中第一比丘... 十二頭陀難得之行所謂大迦葉比丘是. "The premier

having practiced the twelve dhuta ascetic purification practices and well devoted himself to the cultivation, under past buddhas, of the practice of purity (*brahmacaryā*), now is always ready to help the future buddha Maitreya in his work of guiding the people,¹² making explicit a connection we will revisit below. In one *sutta* of the *Saṃyutta-nikāya*, the Buddha offers to Kāśyapa the chance to give up his ascetic practices, and instead wear clothes obtained by donation rather than those picked up from garbage heaps, and to eat at the invitation of donors rather than by the uncertain course of begging. Kāśyapa declines, and insists on maintaining his practice of wilderness dwelling (*araññaka*), alms begging (*piṇḍapātika*), wearing rag robes (*paṃsukūlika*), owning only one set of robes (*tecīvarika*), and so on.¹³ That is, he turns down the chance to live a more certain, less peripatetic life and chooses to continue following the more rigorous practices just named. In another *sutta* that follows almost directly after, the Buddha laments to Kāśyapa that the senior monks now have little interest in such practices and little respect for those who engage in them,¹⁴ a clear reference to the doctrine of decline which plays a central role in the dynamic of rigor and authenticity. Overall, it is fair to say that the image of Kāśyapa in the corpus of earlier materials is as a strict, ascetic, renunciant figure, whose authority stems in great measure from these very qualities.

That the ascetic practices favored by Kāśyapa are connected with possibly extreme and even reactionary tendencies in Buddhist doctrines concerning praxis is emphasized by the coincidence of several of the dhuta ascetic purification practices with those practices advocated by Devadatta but rejected by the Buddha as too severe to enjoin upon all

monk among my auditors ... for the difficult practice of the twelve dhuta ascetic purification practices is the monk Mahākāśyapa.” The *Divyāvadāna* (Cowell and Neil 1886: 61.27-29) has *ayaṃ śrāvakaḥ Kāśyapo nāmnāḥpecchānāṃ saṃtuṣṭānāṃ dhūtaḥaṇavādīnāṃ agro nirdiṣṭaḥ*; the same is found in the Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya *Bhaiṣajyavastu* 根本說一切有部毘奈耶藥事 T. 1448 (XXIV) 25b1-2 (*juan* 6). Such references could easily be multiplied.

¹² *Ekottarikāgama* T. 125 (48.3) (II) 788c26-28 (*juan* 44): 如我今日弟子之中大迦葉者行十二頭陀過去諸佛所善修梵行。此人常佐彌勒勸化人民..

¹³ The passage is *Saṃyutta-nikāya* ii.202,6-203,26 (XVI.5), with the same in the *Saṃyuktāgama* T. 99 (1141) (II) 301c7-29 (*juan* 41) = T. 100 (116) (II) 416b8-c6 (*juan* 6).

¹⁴ *Saṃyutta-nikāya* ii.208,13-210,22 (XVI.8).

monks. This characteristic alone should be enough to attract our interest, since it is surely significant that the authors of Mahāyāna texts should have chosen as their spokesman a figure associated with what are, at least for certain groups, potentially reactionary ideas. But as I have tried to suggest above, it is exactly this tendency which we might consider as central and characteristic: Kāśyapa, the guardian of asceticism, may represent at least one stream of early Mahāyāna thought precisely because he stands for an extreme dedication to fundamentals of renunciant monasticism. If one concern of the authors of early Mahāyāna texts was to assert their orthodoxy and continuity with tradition, what better figure to employ than one whose basic character bespeaks his antipathy for innovation and his respect for tradition?

It will not be out of place to recall here too that, quite clearly in connection with his role as the Buddha's temporal heir, it is Mahākāśyapa who accepts the charge to preserve and transmit the Buddha's teachings,¹⁵ to whom the teaching is explicitly transmitted,¹⁶ and thus it is he who convenes the First Council immediately after the Buddha's death, a task which places him in the position of being the very first ultimate arbiter of canonicity in the history of Buddhist scriptural compilation — again, the very antithesis of the innovator. For some texts Kāśyapa is

¹⁵ As Schopen (1992: 31, n. 46) has pointed out, Kāśyapa is “legally” the heir of the Buddha, and this is, for instance, the reason that he must re-perform his obsequies. At least this seems to be the stance of the Mūlasarvāstivāda. Referring to the time just before the Buddha's death, the Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya *Bhaiṣajyavastu* (Dutt 1939-1959: iii.260.5-6) says: “The entire teaching (*śāsana*) was entrusted by the Blessed One to the Reverend Mahākāśyapa.” *bhagavatāyusmate mahākāśyapāya kṛtsnaṁ śāsanam upanyastam*. In the Theravāda *Theraḡāthā* 1058 and 1169, and *Therīḡāthā* 63 (Oldenberg and Pischel 1883), and perhaps elsewhere, Kassapa is called Buddha's heir (*dāyāda*). However, in at least two other places (*Theraḡāthā* 18, 348), other monks are also so called.

¹⁶ See the Mahāyāna *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*, Peking Kanjur 788, *mdo sna tshogs, tu* 33b1-3 (quoted by Shimoda 1997: 559, n. 110): *dge slong dag khyed de skad ma zer cig | dge slong dag ngas 'od srung gi lag tu bstan pa gtad par bya ste | 'di ni de bzhin gshegs pa dang 'dra bar dge slong rnam kyī rten lta bur 'gyur ro || dge slong rnam dang sems can rnam kyī skyabs lta bur 'gyur ro || dper na rgyal po grong khyer mang po'i mnga' bdag grong khyer gcig tu song te | khyim bdag gcig rgyal por dbang bskur ba de bzhin tu 'jig rten gyi khams 'dir ngas 'od srung chen po dbang skur ro ||* (The relevant technical terms may be **āśraya* and **śaraṇa*). In Chinese at T. 374 (XII) 377c22-28, with 我今所有無上正法悉以付囑摩訶迦葉。是迦葉者、當爲汝等作大依止; T. 375 (XII) 617b24-c2, identical; T. 376 (XII) 862b1-7 如來正法付授大迦葉。大迦葉者、當今爲汝等作歸依處。 See Shimoda 1991a: 64-66; 1993: 155, 181-182; 1997: 221-222, 559- 560, n. 110-111.

even more; the *Kṣudrakavastu* of the Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya and other texts compare him at the time of his death to a “second Buddha.”¹⁷ Although it is plainly stated in numerous sources that the Buddha has no successor as head of the Saṅgha, the Dharma filling that role, it is almost equally plain that Mahākāśyapa, as among other things convener of the First Council, becomes in many respects precisely the head of the Saṅgha and thus is, even if for no other reason, a second Buddha.

Though in (literary) life Kāśyapa is certainly a personage of great interest, again in death, or rather “after-life,” he plays a not inconsiderable role. For not only does Kāśyapa preserve and transmit the teachings, but according to a widely shared tradition he vows to carry the torch — or more literally, the robe — of the Buddha’s teachings and transmit it to the next buddha to arise in this world-realm, Maitreya. This leads us to explore the relation between Kāśyapa and Maitreya.¹⁸

¹⁷ T. 1451 (XXIV) 409b8 (*juan* 40) 如第二佛入般涅槃, translated in Pryzluski 1914: 526; in Tibetan the text is virtually the same, but the comparison uses the term Bhagavan (Derge Kanjur 6, ‘*dul ba, da* 308a7): *da ni bcom ldan ‘das gnyis kho na yongs su mya ngan las ‘das so snyam sems te*. The **Aśokarājasūtra* T. 2043 (L) 154a2 (*juan* 7), translated in Li 1993: 112, has almost exactly the same.

Note, however, that in the **Mahāprajñāpāramitopadeśa* T. 1509 (XXV) 68b19 (*juan* 2) (trans. Pryzluski 1926-1928: 64; Lamotte 1944-1980: 97) it is Śāriputra who is called the/a second Buddha. In *Suttanipāta* 556 (Andersen and Smith 1913) = *Theragāthā* 826 (Oldenberg and Pischel 1883), Śāriputta is termed the Buddha’s “successor” (*avaya*). It seems that the Jaina *Isibhāsiyāṁ* §38 (Schubring 1974) also refers to Śāriputra as Buddha. We recall here that since Śāriputra predeceased the Buddha, he could not function as an actual successor. See Nagasaki 1983: 445-446, 449, and for a detailed study of Śāriputra Migot 1954. For investigations into the early senses and uses of the word ‘buddha,’ see Namikawa 1988, 1991, 1992.

¹⁸ This connection has been studied in detail several times. See in particular Lamotte 1944-1980: 190-196, with copious notes; Sakurabe 1965; Kumoi 1992, esp. 89-92; and Lévi 1929: 40-46. In addition to these studies, on Maitreya more generally one may refer in the first place to the excellent synthesis in Lamotte 1958: 775-788. The following are also important: Akanuma 1939: 194-216; Demiéville 1920; Kagawa 1963; Leumann 1919; Lévi 1932; Matsumoto 1911; Peri 1911; Watanabe 1976. For further reference, one may refer to: Baruch 1947; Hikata 1973a, 1973b; Imoto 1982; Kimura 1982, 1983; La Vallée Poussin 1928; Sadakata 1981; Shimizu 1978; Sponberg and Hardacre 1988; and Tokiya 1979. For Maitreya in Indian and Central Asian art, see the massive study of Miyaji 1992.

It may be apposite to notice here the frequent suggestions that Maitreya should be associated with Iranian traditions. I have nothing to add to this debate, except to note that since long ago there has been a suggestion that we see in the connection between Kāśyapa and Maitreya some reflection of the Iranian connection between Kərəsaspaspa and Saošyant.

A popular story in earlier Buddhist literature recounts that Kāśyapa, when his time in this world came to an end, entered a mountain to await the coming of Maitreya, and pass on to him the robe he had received from Śākyamuni.¹⁹ As Sakurabe has pointed out, this story emphasizes the connection and continuity between the teaching of Śākyamuni and that of Maitreya through the vehicle of Kāśyapa.²⁰ The robe in this narrative appears to serve as a symbol or emblem²¹ of Śākyamuni's teaching, as indeed Buddhaghosa's commentary to the *Saṃyutta-nikāya* has understood it. At their first meeting the Buddha wishes to exchange robes with Kassapa (the Pāli form of the name Kāśyapa) "because he wished to establish the Elder in his own position."²² The *Mahāvamsa* says the same thing: Kassapa considers that the Buddha "had given him his garment, and had (thereby) made him equal with himself."²³ We will

See Abegg 1928: 242; Przyluski 1923: 178-179, 1929: 11; and Nattier 1988: 46, n. 60. Przyluski 1929: 11 suggested that "although Kāśyapa may not be identical with Keresaspa, the resemblance of the two names is palpable enough that, in transposing the Iranian fable, the Buddhist story-tellers chose Kāśyapa as being the one among the disciples of the Buddha whose name was closest to Keresaspa." Although to be sure Przyluski was often over-enthusiastic in his pursuit of cross-cultural influences, here the always sober Pelliot 1931: 196 agrees with Przyluski (see 1929: 10-11) that "there is a connection between Mithra and Maitreya, and ... the legend of Kāśyapa sleeping in [Mount] Kukku-tapāda owes something to Keresaspa."

I am not capable of deciding whether this hypothesis is reasonable or not, but given the likelihood of some sort of connection between Maitreya and Iran, it should perhaps not be dismissed out of hand.

¹⁹ The story in this form is found in many places, including: *Ekottarikāgama* T. 125 (48.3) (II) 788c28-789a21 (*juan* 44) = *Mile xiasheng-jing* 彌勒下生經 T. 453 (XIV) 422b12-c4 [see B. Matsumoto 1911: 23; Peri 1911: 444, 449-450]; Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya *Kṣudrakavastu* T. 1451 (XXIV) 409b28-c6 (*juan* 40), translated in Przyluski 1914: 527-528; **Aśokarājāvadāna* T. 2042 (L) 114c18-21 (*juan* 4), translated in Przyluski 1914: 544 and 1923: 331-332, 115a15-28, translated in Przyluski 1914: 546 and 1923: 333-334; **Aśokarājasūtra* T. 2043 (L) 154a28-29 (*juan* 7), translated in Li 1993: 114. As far as I know, this story is unknown to the Pāli tradition, with the exception of a work called *Mahāsampīḍanidāna*, apparently dating from the late twelfth century; see Saddhatissa 1975: 43-44. The story in this work may well reflect the influence of northern sources.

²⁰ Sakurabe 1965: 38-39.

²¹ Cp. Chavannes and Lévi 1916: 196 who speak of Mahākāśyapa as "revêtu de la saṃghāṭī que le Bouddha lui avait passée comme un emblème d'investiture."

²² Woodward 1932: 199.24: *theraṃ attano thāne thapetukāmatāya*. See Bodhi 2000: I.806, n. 307.

²³ *Mahāvamsa* III.7 (Geiger 1908: 16), translated in Geiger 1912: 15: *saraṃ cīvaradānaṃ ca samatte thapanam tathā | saddhammaṭṭhapanatthāya muninānuggahaṃ kataṃ ||*

thus expect the story of Kāśyapa's acquisition of Śākyamuni's robe to confirm its importance — and as we will see, Śākyamuni's robe is not just any robe.

The common story of Kāśyapa's acquisition of the Buddha's robe is well known through the version in Pāli in the *Saṃyutta-nikāya*, but it appears in Chinese as well. Since the Pāli version is already widely available in English, I translate one of the Chinese versions of the *Saṃyuktāgama* here:²⁴

The Venerable Mahākāśyapa spoke to Ānanda saying: “From the time that I renounced the world, I never recognized that there were any other teachers, only the Tathāgata, Arhat, Perfect and Complete Buddha. When I had not yet renounced the world, I always pondered birth, old age, disease and death, grief and lamentation, unhappiness and suffering. I knew that the home life is teeming with duties and full of all kinds of defilements, and that renouncing the world is [freedom like] open space. It is hardly possible for a householder to take his place in the homeless state, single mindedly clear, his whole life long totally and fully pure, with his practice of purity (**brahmacaryā*) clear and good. I should cut off my hair and beard, and put on the *kāṣāya* robes. Full of faith, homeless I shall renounce the world in order to pursue awakening.

“Taking a robe worth a hundred thousand pieces of gold I rent the fabric into pieces and made it into a *saṃghāṭi* (upper) robe.²⁵ [I thought:] ‘If there

²⁴ In Chinese we have the (Mūlasarvāstivāda) *Za Ahan-jing* 雜阿含經 T. 99 (1144) (II) 303a22-b29 (*juan* 41), which I translate here (abbreviating the middle portion), and an alternate translation of the same in T. 100 (119) (II) 418a23-c14 (*juan* 6). The corresponding passage in Pāli is *Saṃyutta-nikāya* ii.219,24-221,21 (XVI.II.14-29). Virtually the same is found in the *Mahāvastu*, Senart 1882-1897: iii.50,6-54,14. The same reference is also found in the **Mahāprajñāpāramitopadeśa* T. 1509 (XXV) 225a4-5 (*juan* 22), translated in Lamotte 1944-1980: 1399. The story is also alluded to any number of times, as it is in passing for instance in the *Ratnarāsi* (VII.18, edited and translated in Silk 1994: 378-9, 496, 631), and the *Dajiasheben-jing* 大迦葉本經 T. 496 (XIV) 761a18ff.

²⁵ Pāli has here *paṭapilotikānaṃ saṃghāṭiṃ karitvā* (*Saṃyutta-nikāya* ii.219,31-220,1). The terminology here is not absolutely clear, but there seems to be no special indication that the robes are of high quality. Lamotte 1944-1980: 1399, however, refers to the commentary on this passage (*Sāratthappakāsinī*, Woodward 1932: 180.14-17), in which the cloth rendered into pieces is referred to as “garments of great price.” We find the following: “... Tearing apart cloth of great price, he made a monastic robe out of it, so it is said “a monastic robe made out of cloth.” *paṭapilotikānaṃ ti chinṇapilotikānaṃ | terasahattho pi hi navasāṭako dasācchinnakālato paṭṭhāya pilotikā ti vuccati | iti mahārahāni vatthāni chinditvā kataṃ saṃghāṭiṃ*

are Arhats in the world, I will listen to them and renounce the world.' Having renounced the world, at the stūpa of Bahuputraka in between Rājagṛha and Nālanda I encountered the Blessed One, sitting straight up, his primary and secondary bodily marks wondrous, his senses calmed, completely at ease, like a golden mountain. When I saw him I thought: 'This is my teacher, this is the Blessed One, this is the Arhat, this is the Perfect and Complete Buddha.'

"Then with palms joined together I made reverent obeisance to him with a single pointed mind, and I spoke to the Buddha saying: '[You] are my teacher, I am your disciple.' The Buddha spoke to me saying: 'Just so, Kāśyapa. I am your teacher, you are my disciple. ...'

"At that time the Blessed One preached the Teaching to me, revealed the teaching, inspired me and pleased me, and having revealed the teaching, inspired me and pleased me he got up and left. I also went following him toward his dwelling place. I took my *saṃghāṭi* robe made from rent fabric worth a hundred thousand pieces of gold, and folded it in four as a seat.

"At that time the Blessed One knew my mind, and from where he was staying came down to the road.²⁶ I then spread out the robe as a sitting mat and asked the Buddha to be seated, and the Blessed One then sat. He stroked the robe with his hand, and said in praise: 'Kāśyapa, this robe is light and fine, this robe is soft and supple.' I then said: 'Just so, Blessed One. This robe is light and fine, this robe is soft and supple. I really wish the Blessed One would accept this robe of mine.' The Buddha said: 'Kāśyapa, you should accept my refuse rag robe,²⁷ and I will accept your

sandhāya paṭapilotikānaṃ saṃghāṭin ti vuttaṃ. In the *Mahāvastu* (Senart 1882-1897: iii.50,15) the robes are of cotton: *ekaṃ karpāsikaṃ paṭapilotikam ādāya.*

In the printed text of the *Divyavadāna* (Cowell and Neil 1886: 395.24) the robes are referred to as *śvetacīvara*, white robes. But I suspect that the reading (despite having been translated as such by Burnouf 1844: 391 and Strong 1983: 254) is wrong. Although he prints the same reading, Mukhopadhyaya (1963: 90.7, with n. 8) points out that the Chinese versions (he knows actually only one, and that through Pryzluski's French) support rather the reading **svacīvara*, "his own (that is, the Buddha's own) robes." See T. 2042 (L) 104b21 (*juan* 2): 佛自脱衣以與迦葉, translated in Pryzluski 1923: 258, and T. 2043 (L) 138b21-22 (*juan* 2): 又以自身袈裟覆之, translated in Li 1993: 35. Further, the presumption that "white robes" should refer to a layman's clothing, this most explicitly being what Śākyamuni is *not* giving to Kāśyapa, militates against the reading *śveta*^o. The text seems to be saying only that Śākyamuni, having shared his seat, gave to Kāśyapa his own robes.

²⁶ I do not entirely understand 處處下道 at T. 99 (II) 303b24, paralleled by 出道而住 at T. 100 (II) 418c6; the latter means something like "came out on the road and stood there." The sense is that Kāśyapa followed the Buddha, who had returned to his dwelling place. When Kāśyapa arrived, the Buddha emerged to meet him.

²⁷ Both the Pāli version (221.15-16) and the *Mahāvastu* (54.10) clarify that the robe is of hemp, reading *sāṇāni paṃsukulāni nibbanāni* and *śāṇānaṃ pāṃsukulānāṃ saṃghāṭīm*, respectively.

saṅghāṭi.’ The Buddha then gave me his refuse rag robe with his own hands, and I presented my *saṅghāṭi* to the Buddha.”

The same story, although arranged in a considerably different way, appears also in the **Vinayamātrkā*,²⁸ where the story of the robe does not appear until later in the relationship of Mahākāśyapa and the Buddha; the Buddha praises the robe of Kāśyapa, and the latter offers it to him.²⁹ The Buddha then asks Kāśyapa what he wants in return, and the latter asks for the “**kāśika* grass *pāmsukūla* robe,”³⁰ a choice of which the Buddha approves.

Yet another version is found in identical form in several *sutta* commentaries in Pāli. We read:³¹

The Elder [Mahākassapa], knowing that the Teacher wanted to sit down, folded into four the cloth outer robe he himself was wearing and indicated it [as a seat].³² The Teacher sat there, and stroking the robe with his hand said “This cloth robe of yours is soft, Kassapa.” The Elder understood that the Teacher, by saying that his robe is indeed soft, would want to put it on, and said: “Reverend, the Blessed One should put on this robe.”

“What will you wear, Kassapa?” he said.

“I will get your clothing and wear that, Reverend.”

“Will you be able to carry this old rag robe used [by me]? On the day I obtained this rag robe, the entire earth shook up to the encircling boundary of the oceans. It is not possible to carry this old robe worn by the Buddhas with only a small amount of merit. Only one with strength equal to the

²⁸ 毘尼母經 T. 1463 (XXIV) 803c8ff. (*juan* 1).

²⁹ This episode is found narrated at 805a6-16.

³⁰ The expression 迦尸迦草糞掃衣 at 805a14 is very odd. While *cāo* 草 may, it is true, mean here not “grass” but rather “low quality, rough,” and while *kāśika* strictly speaking means “from Benares,” it is hard to reconcile the term *kāśika* in its usual sense of high quality robes (see n. 45, below) with the *pāmsukūla*. The text may somehow be corrupt, although the reading is confirmed in both the Korean and Jisha editions.

³¹ It is common for Buddhaghosa to repeat verbatim large blocks of text in different commentaries. In this case the text is in the *Paramatthadīpanī Theragāthā-Aṭṭhakathā* ad Thag verses 1051-90, the crucial episode quoted here being found at Woodward 1959: 134.31-135.8, and also in *Manorathapūraṇī*, Walleser 1924: 182.14-29 (I.XIV.A.4), translated in Oikawa 1987: 20.

³² I take this opportunity to note that I remain unconvinced that the verb *prajñāpayati* must in such environments regularly mean “arrange [a seat],” as suggested by Edgerton (1953, s.v.), despite the Tibetan translation with *shom pa*, and examples like that at *Mahāvastu* i.238.12. I do not see why in very many such cases the word may not be at least equally well interpreted with the etymologically entirely defensible “indicate [a seat].” Cp. also the comments in Oguibenine 1983.

task, capable of fully carrying out correct practice, an excellent wearer of rag robes, should take hold of it,” and so saying he passed the robe over to the Elder.

Very similar to this is the account in the **Abhiniṣkramaṇasūtra*, which also makes a point of having the Buddha ask Kāśyapa whether he is able to wear the *pāmsukūla* robes. In telling the story, the Buddha pointedly extols the virtues of Kāśyapa, and says: “You monks, if you want to know who is my auditor, my disciple, of few wishes and easily satisfied, who practices the dhuta ascetic purification practices fully and completely — this is the monk the Reverend Mahākāśyapa.”³³ We recognize here a classic dynamic of purity and spiritual power. As a monk or applicant for ordination, Kāśyapa should not wear fancy robes, indeed should not wear anything but the plainest robes. At the same time, the Buddha, whose spiritual and purificatory power is great, is able to break his own rules and wear such robes, without falling under their potentially corrupting influence. This is a common pattern: the Buddha is often able to do things that other monks cannot, and is not bound by the rules that he lays down to bind his disciples, because of his superior attainments.³⁴ On the other hand, the Pāli commentaries and the

³³ 佛本行集經 T. 190 (III) 866c10-867a3 (*juan* 46). The portion translated is 866c29-867a3. Foulk 1999: 292, n. 82, evidently overlooked this episode when, after locating Kāśyapa’s meeting with Śākyamuni at the Grove of Many Sons (866a28, b10), reminiscent of the *Saṃyuktāgama*’s Bahuputraka stūpa mentioned above, he stated “There is no mention of an exchange of robes.” He seems likewise to have missed the parallel in the Mūlasarvāstivāda *Bhikṣuṇīvinayavibhaṅga* T. 1443 (XXIII) 911c21-912a1, again after noticing the initial meeting at the Bahuputraka stūpa at 911b.

³⁴ We recall here the episode of the Buddha’s last meal, at which he receives food which only he may eat, and even more the idea that no one may consume a Buddha’s leftover food. I will discuss this and related issues in the near future, especially in relation to the very interesting hypotheses of Tomomatsu Entai, for which see particularly 1933, 1935-1936. It may be only phenomenologically that one might also compare the case of the water used to wash the Śiva *liṅga*, which is *nirmālya*, that which is totally pure, and is never to be consumed by humans. This contrasts with the Vaiṣṇava *caranāṃṛta*, the water which is used to wash Viṣṇu, and which can be consumed, along with the *naivedya* offerings which, consumed by a god, become *prasāda* and are shared out among devotees who consume them without impurity because of the god’s total superiority to their own position. (See Stevenson 1920: 388, and Davis 1991: 154-157.) Compare also the *Sumāgadhāvadāna* story of the disciple Cunda at Lake Anavatapta, in which some of the gods who wash the blood-soaked garment Cunda obtained from a corpse subsequently drink that wash water; *Xumotinu-jing* 須摩提女經 T. 128 (II) (recension b) 839a12-b16,

**Abhiniṣkramaṇasūtra* go out of their way to glorify Kāśyapa as well. The rag robes of the Buddha are, as it were, imbued with his own charisma and power, and it is only Kāśyapa's own spiritual strength which allows him to wear these robes which, it is explained, one with a small amount of merit and so on would not be able to do. We find this point made again in somewhat different terms in Buddhaghosa's commentary to the *Saṃyutta-nikāya*, the *Sāratthappakāsinī*:³⁵

[The scripture says:] "Then will you, Kassapa, wear my cast off hempen rag robes?" [The commentary rephrases:] "Kassapa, are you able to wear these old rag robes used [by me]?" This is said in such a way not in reference to [Kassapa's] bodily strength, but in reference to the fulfillment of his practice. In this context this means: This robe, worn by the female slave Puṇṇā, was discarded in a charnel ground.³⁶ When I [Śākyamuni] entered

translated in Tokiwai 1898: 23-24. See Silk 1994: 72-75. There is also a remarkable passage from the Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya, referred to in passing by Schopen 1998: 166, in which the water used to wash monks' bowls is mentioned as distributed to lay persons as a curative agent. Such references require further study.

³⁵ Woodward 1932: 199.27-200.9 (XVI.11), but with reference to the better text found in the Dhammagiri-Pāli-Ganthamālā edition (Igatpuri: Vipassana Research Institute, 1994): vol. 30, p. 175. The commentary is quoting *Saṃyutta-nikāya* ii.221,15-17 (XVI.11.28). Note too the passage in the Mahīśāsaka Vinaya (T. 1421 [XXII] 68c8-18 [juan 9]) in which the Buddha specifies that a robe donated to the community must be given to Kāśyapa, since a passionless robe can only be presented to and worn by a passionless person.

³⁶ I am not sure this rendering is correct. If we compare the parallel expressions in the *Manorathapūraṇī* (IV.III.8, Kopp 1936: 48.24): *puṇṇadāsiyā pārupitvā chaḍḍitapaṃsukūlaṃ* and *Sumaṅgalavilāsinī* (XXXIII.I.II.ix, Stede 1932: 1011: 23): *puṇṇadāsiyā sarīraṃ pārupitvā chaḍḍitapaṃsukūlaṃ*, they seem to suggest that Puṇṇā wore the robes and discarded them herself in the charnel ground. See also *Papañcasūdanī* (ad *Majjhima-nikāya* 77, Mahāsakuludāyi-sutta; Horner 1933: iii.239): *atimuttakasukasānato hissa puṇṇadāsiyā pārupitvā pātitasāṇapaṃsukūlaṃ gahaṇadivase udakapariyantaṃ katvā mahāpathavi akampi*.

However, this reading is not supported by what we can learn from an episode in the *Lalitavistara*. In that text, having given up his extreme fast and decided to resume eating so as to sustain his body, the future Buddha thinks (Lefmann 1902-1908: 265.16-22, trans. Foucaux 1884: 228-9; Tib. Foucaux 1847: 232, trans. Foucaux 1848: 255-6; see Bays 1983: II.405): "These my clothes of ochre robes, monks, over the span of six years have become quite old. Then it occurred to me, monks: 'If I could obtain a cloth to cover my genitals, that would be lovely.' And at that time, monks, a slave girl named Rādhā, who belonged to the townsman's daughter Sujātā, died. Wrapped in hemp, she was dragged to the charnel ground and discarded. I saw that rag robe, and so I stepped toward it with my left foot, and stretching out my right hand I bent low to take it." The relevance of this story comes from the fact that, although it does not know this episode, the

that cemetery, it was strewn with a mass of creatures.³⁷ Dispersing them and fixed in the great saintly attitudes,³⁸ I took hold [of the robe]. On the day I took hold of that robe of mine, the whole earth let out a great roar throughout the ten thousand worldsystems. The sky shook; the divinities in the world-systems sent their applause. [The Buddha said:] “The monk who takes hold of this robe ought to practice as an excellent practitioner of wearing rag robes, an excellent practitioner of forest dwelling, an excellent practitioner of eating at one sitting, an excellent practitioner of [alms begging] in uninterrupted systematic order.³⁹ You [Kassapa] are capable of

Nidānakathā of the Pāli Jātaka names the slave girl of Sujātā Puṇṇā (Fausbøll 1877: 69; trans. Rhys Davids 1880: 92, and Jayawickrama 1990: 91). These correspondences may suggest that Buddhaghosa knew some version of the story related in the *Lalitavistara*, in which the name of the relevant character however was not Rādhā but Puṇṇā, as in the *Nidānakathā*. (Note that this episode in the *Lalitavistara* suggests that, were the text to have included materials subsequent to the Buddha’s first preaching, the robe which the Buddha might pass on to Kāśyapa could not have been the robe the Buddha first obtained at the time of his Great Departure, since here he discards it for another from the corpse of Rādhā.)

³⁷ The term *tumbamatta* in the expression *tumbamattehi pāṇakehi sampariṇṇaṃ* is not entirely clear to me. Given that in Pāli *tumba* seems to mean either a sort of water vessel, shaped like a gourd, or a unit of measure, and that Sanskrit *tumba* means a kind of gourd, a meaning consistent throughout Indian languages (see Turner 1966: 335: §5868), the expression might refer either to creatures whose appearance is gourd-like, or to a unit of measure. I do not see that the meaning is completely clarified by the parallel pointed out to me by Lance Cousins (email 14 Feb., 2001), in which the creatures are apparently those referred to a few sentences before as *nīlamakkhika*, blue flies (for *nīlamakṣika* as impure creatures, see the *Kāśyapaparivarta* §100); see *Manorathapūraṇī* IV.III.8, Kopp 1936: 48 = *Sumaṅgalavilāsini* XXXIII.II.ix, Stede 1932: 1011. On the other hand, Cousins also pointed me to the *Linathappakāsana*, sub-commentary to the *Saṃyutta-nikāya*, in which we find the sentence *pādaghaṭakan ti doṇassa catubhāgo saṅṭhānato khuddako tasmā pādaghataṭakappamā ṇan ti tumbamattaṃ* (Dhammagiri-Pāli-Ganthamālā edition vol. 32, p. 257 = §1.1.217, on *Vaṅḡsasamyyutta, Koṇḍaññasuttavaṇṇanā*). Here, however, while the meaning clearly refers to a unit of measure, if I understand the sentence correctly the amount is rather small. I would like to thank Cousins for his generous and helpful advice on many aspects of the interpretation of this passage.

³⁸ The *ariyavaṃsa* here refer to the four essentially ascetic attitudes: satisfaction with whatever robes, alms and lodging one is able to obtain, and delight with meditation and detachment. The text is stressing Śākyamuni’s contentment even with such robes as these.

³⁹ Bodhi 2000: I.807, n. 307, understands *jāti-* to signify that the practices have been undertaken since birth. This is possible, but I prefer the meaning offered by Rhys Davids and Stede 1921-1925 s.v. *jāti* 4 and Edgerton 1953 s.v. *jāti* 3. I believe this is supported by what the commentary says in an immediately preceding passage (Woodward 1932: 199.16- 19), namely that at their first meeting it was the Buddha’s intention to make Kassapa into a practitioner of the listed dhuta practices: *imaṃ bhikkhuṃ jāti-ārañṇakaṃ jāti-paṃsukūlikaṃ jāti-ekāsanikaṃ karissāmī ti*. Bodhi 2000: I.806, n. 306 understands this as “making Kassapa a forest dweller ... from his very birth (as a monk),” an interpretation

acting appropriately toward the robe.” Although the elder himself possessed the strength of five elephants, without considering that [because of the irrelevance of bodily strength], out of enthusiasm he said: “I will fulfill this practice,” and desiring to act appropriately toward the robe of the Sugata, he said: “I will wear it, Reverend Sir.”

Here this text again links the practice of the dhuta ascetic purification practices, wearing rag robes, forest dwelling and so on, with the rag robe of the Buddha himself. This Ceylonese version of the origin of the Buddha’s own robe, which appears to be unique (but see the passages referred to in note 36), has it coming originally from the lowest of the low, the corpse of a female slave discarded in a charnel ground. It is this very robe which by virtue of the fact that the Buddha had used it (it is called *paribhoga*, an object of use) has been made so holy as to restrict those who might dare to wear it.⁴⁰

It is a sign of the diversity of the tradition that there exists at least one other version of the story under consideration here, preserved only in Chinese, in which Kāśyapa passes on to Maitreya a robe he received from the Buddha on the latter’s death bed.⁴¹ The idea that Kāśyapa

which seems to me strained, despite Ven. Bodhi’s reference (email 19 Feb., 2001) to *Majjhima-nikāya* ii.103,20, in which the Buddha appears to refer to monastic ordination as a “noble birth,” *Āṅgulimāla* being instructed to perform an act of truth by stating that he has done no harm to any creature since being born in the noble birth, *ariyāya jātiyā jāto*. Despite my disagreement here, I should emphasize my debt to Bodhi’s notes to his translation, and to the many kind comments he shared with me by email concerning the interpretation of the passage.

⁴⁰ That this dynamic applies particularly to the Buddha may be seen by comparing the story offered in explanation of Nissaggiya 20 by the Pāli Vinaya (Oldenberg 1881: iii.240- 241; trans. Horner 1940: ii.108-109). Here a non-Buddhist wanderer, *paribbājaka*, trades with the monk Upananda his valuable clothing, *mahagga paṭa*, for the monk’s monastic cloth robe, *paṭapilotika saṅghāṭi*, which was well dyed and well worked, *suratta suparikammakata*. He later regrets the uneven exchange, clearly agreeing with his fellow wanderers that he got the worse end of the deal. On the treatment in other Vinayas, see Hirakawa 1993: 373-391.

⁴¹ The passage is in the *Mile dachengfo-jing* 彌勒大成佛經 T. 456 (XIV) 433b19-22 (*juan* 5): “[Kāśyapa] will take Śākyamuni Buddha’s *saṅghāṭi* and give it to Maitreya, saying: ‘The great teacher Śākyamuni, the Tathāgata, Arhat, Saṅghasambuddha conferred this upon me at the time of his final nirvāṇa, commanding me to give it to the Blessed One [you, Maitreya].’” (This passage was also translated by Kaikyoku Watanabe in Leumann 1919: 276, and Lamotte 1944-1980: 191, n. 1). Note that this story involves a contradiction with the general account of the Buddha’s nirvāṇa, in which Kāśyapa is late arriving at the funeral. He would, therefore, have had no chance to obtain anything from

received the Buddha's robe upon the latter's death is known also from an approximately ninth century Indian inscription in Sanskrit, but there is no mention of Maitreya there.⁴²

The story of Kāśyapa's acquisition of the Buddha's robe and its significance can only be properly appreciated in light of the story of the Buddha's own first acquisition of his ochre robes, one variant version of which we have just seen. According to the nearly unanimous tradition of the classical Indian hagiographical accounts, the Buddha himself upon going forth into the renunciant state surrendered his own robes of good quality in exchange for humble garments. In the Pāli *Nidānakathā*, and Sanskrit *Mahāvastu*, *Buddhacarita*, *Lalitavistara* and Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya, to list just a few fundamental texts, the bodhisattva entering the forest after his Great Departure encounters a hunter created by the gods. He then trades his robes of fine Benares cloth (*kāśika*) for the hunter's rough ochre garments (*kāṣāya*). Since the first three of these texts are available in reliable English translations of their Indic originals,⁴³ I translate here the versions in the latter two texts. The *Lalitavistara* has the story this way:⁴⁴

the Buddha directly, although as mentioned above, he presumably does inherit the Buddha's belongings.

⁴² Chhabra 1939-1940; Tsukamoto 1996: 213-214 (Silao 1); Shizutani 1979: Gupta §168. The inscription is said to be from Silao, located between Nālanda and Rājagṛha, and is found on the base of an image of Kāśyapa. The relevant portion refers to Kāśyapa's receipt of the Buddha's robe and his subsequent recitation at the First Council, and reads: *nirvān prādād api ca sugataḥ svīyasamhātikādīr yasmai vauddhapravacanavidā yena gītas ca dharmmah*. We should remember that Kāśyapa is said to have encountered the Buddha at Bahuputraka, likewise located between Nālanda and Rājagṛha, as Chhabra 1939-1940: 331 has noted.

⁴³ *Nidānakathā* in Fausbøll 1877: 65, translated in Rhys Davids 1880: 86-87, and Jayawickrama 1990: 87; *Mahāvastu* at Senart 1882-1897: ii.195.6-11, translated in Jones 1949-1956: II.186; *Buddhacarita* at Johnston 1935: 66.3-67.4 = vi.59-66, translated in Johnston 1936: 89-91. See also the **Abhiniṣkramaṇa-sūtra* T. 190 (III) 737c22-738a19 (*juan* 18), translated in Beal 1875: 144-145, and the Mahīśāsaka Vinaya 彌沙塞部和醯五分律 T. 1421 (XXII) 102b8-9 (*juan* 15), translated in Bareau 1963: 22 (31); 1974: 252 (96). In addition, mostly unstudied, we have for instance the *Xiuxing benqijing* 修行本起經 T T. 184 (III) 469a26-b4 (*juan* xia).

⁴⁴ Lefmann 1902-1908: 225.20-226.13. The Tibetan translation is found in Foucaux 1847: 195.17-196.11, translated in Foucaux 1848: 214-215. The Sanskrit was translated in Foucaux 1884: 197, and see Bays 1983: I.339.

Then this occurred to the bodhisattva: “Having renounced the world, how can I possibly [wear] robes of fine Benares cloth?⁴⁵ If I were to obtain ochre robes suitable for forest dwelling, that would be splendid.” Then it occurred to the Śuddhāvāsakāyika gods that the bodhisattva needed ochre robes.

So one divinity, concealing his divine form, stood before the bodhisattva in the form of a hunter wrapped in ochre robes.

Then the bodhisattva said to him: “If you, worthy man,⁴⁶ will give me your ochre robes, I will give you these robes of fine Benares cloth.” He said: “These clothes look good on you, and these on me.”

The bodhisattva said: “I beg you,” and so that divinity in the form of the hunter gave the ochre robes to the bodhisattva, and took those of fine Benares cloth. Then the divinity out of regard for them placed them atop his head with both hands and went to the divine realm to worship them. Chandaka [the bodhisattva’s groom] saw that [scene]. A shrine was established there too, and even now that shrine is known as “Taking of the Ochre Robes.”

The version in the *Saṅghabhedavastu* of the Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya is interesting for the background story it provides.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ There is some disagreement concerning the meaning of the term *kāśika*. Edgerton 1953, s.v. *kāśika* suggested that it probably means “fine cotton or muslin,” while Waldschmidt 1956: 85, n. 1 (to 4c.2) suggested “Stoff aus Kāśī, kostbarer Stoff, Seidenstoff.” The complicated question of the history of silk in India and the meaning of technical terms such as *kāśika* in Buddhist literature has yet to be dealt with satisfactorily. Here I take a conservative course, making no assumptions about the precise sense of the term *kāśika*.

⁴⁶ Sanskrit plural (at least as printed by Lefmann), but Tibetan singular; is it a plural of respect, or shall we emend *mārṣā* to **mārṣa*?

⁴⁷ I translate the Sanskrit in Gnoli 1977-1978: i.92.6-93.16. The Tibetan translation is found in the Derge Kanjur 1, *'dul ba, nga* 14b1-15b1, and in Chinese at T. 1450 (XXIV) 117c27-118b1 (*juan* 4). The former is quite close to the Sanskrit, the latter somewhat less so, but the divergences are not relevant here. See Rockhill 1907: 26, whose paraphrase from Tibetan however misses the point in a number of instances.

The same text is also found in the *Zhongxu mohedi-jing* 衆許摩訶帝經 T. 191 (III) 947b12-c8 (*juan* 5), a work translated between 985-994 by Faxian 法賢. Interestingly, this Chinese version is rather more coherent from a narrative point of view than the somewhat choppy corresponding Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya versions. It is possible that a slightly different original stands behind it, but also possible that the story was cleaned up and given more narrative coherence by its Chinese translator. Byōdō 1930: 171 states, without explanation, that the text is a Sammatīya work, but given the identification with the *Saṅghabhedavastu*, apparently first made by Sakurabe 1930-1932: 405, this is most unlikely. See the careful comparisons of Sasaki 1985, who naturally concludes that the work is derived from the Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya.

It occurred to the bodhisattva that he needed ochre robes. In the town Anupama (Incomparable) there was a wealthy householder, rich, well-off, with extensive possessions, endowed with the riches of Vaiśravaṇa (the god of wealth), rivaling Vaiśravaṇa in riches. He obtained a wife from a suitable family, and had intercourse with her, from which a son was born. Eventually ten sons were born, and all of them having renounced the world directly experienced the awakening of a Pratyekabuddha. Their mother was old, and she presented them with hempen robes.⁴⁸ They said “Mother, we will obtain final nirvāṇa; we have no need of these. But a boy named Śākyamuni, son of the King Śuddhodana, will awaken to unexcelled perfect awakening. Give these to him. That then will produce a great result for you.” So saying, and producing a miraculous display of burning, shining, raining and lightning, they attained final nirvāṇa in the realm of nirvāṇa without remainder.

That old woman likewise at the moment of her death gave those robes to her daughter, and told her how things stood. Her daughter too became ill, and when she detected her own approaching death she left [the robes] by a tree. She supplicated the divinity who occupied that tree, saying “You shall give these to the son of King Śuddhodana.”

Śakra, Lord of the gods, realized what was happening below. He picked up [the robes] and took them, and making himself magically appear in the form of an old, infirm hunter, with bow and arrow in his hands, he waited to meet the bodhisattva on the way. The bodhisattva, who wandered down that road in the course of time, saw the hunter with bow and arrow in his hands, wearing an ochre garment. And seeing that he said to the man: “Lo, my man, these garments of hemp are appropriate for a renunciant. Take these delicate ones of fine Benares cloth, and give those to me!” He said: “Young man, I will not give these to you. I’m afraid that on this account others would say I killed the prince and took these fine garments of fine Benares cloth.”⁴⁹

⁴⁸ It seems quite clear that *śāṇa* indeed refers to hemp, although some dictionaries promiscuously offer flax as another meaning. See, for example, *Manusmṛiti* II.41, where we find the compound *śāṇakṣaumāvika*, meaning hemp, linen and wool. This understanding is supported in the commentaries of Sarvajñānarāyaṇa, Kullūka, Rāghavānanda and Nandana, edited in Dave 1972: 232. In the Dharmasūtra of Āpastamba 1.1.2.40 (Bühler 1932), hemp is for Brāhmaṇas and linen for Kṣatriyas, but in that of Gautama I.17 (Stenzler 1876), garments of hemp, linen, tree bark (*cīra*) and wool (? *kutapa*—following Bühler 1879: 174 and Olivelle 1999: 78) may be worn by students of all castes. For a few references to robe materials in the Vinayas, see Hirakawa 1972: 115-116.

⁴⁹ Indeed, just such a suspicion is voiced by the father of the Buddha, Śuddhodana, in the *Lalitavistara*. The horsemen sent out by the king to search for Gautama come upon the divinity, who is carrying the bodhisattva’s robes of fine Benares cloth on his head (it is not explained why he is still in the human world, when he is stated to have ascended

The bodhisattva said: “Lo, my man, the whole world knows how powerful I am. Who is able to kill me? Who would believe that you have killed me? Don’t worry — give them to me.” Then Śakra, Lord of the gods, threw himself down at the bodhisattva’s feet, presented him the hemp [garments], and took the fine Benares cloth ones.

Those hemp garments did not fit the bodhisattva, and it occurred to him: “Well! May these hemp robes fit me!” Immediately after he uttered these words, those hemp robes came to fit the bodhisattva. Of course this was [all possible] through the bodhisattva’s super-bodhisattva power, and the gods’ super-divine power.⁵⁰

The bodhisattva thought to himself: “Now I am gone forth! I will benefit the entire world.” Then taking those clothes of the bodhisattva made of fine Benares cloth, Śakra instituted a “fine Benares cloth festival” among the gods in the Heavens of the Thirty Three.⁵¹ In that place [on earth, where the exchange took place,] devout brahmins and householders set up a shrine called “Taking the ochre robe,” and even today shrine-worshipping monks worship it.⁵² Then the bodhisattva, shaved and wearing the ochre robes, wandered forth from there and arrived at the retreat of the Sage Bhārgava.

It is of some interest to note that basically the same story, with some variation, is retold by Xuanzang, who apparently visited the very shrine

to the divine realm). They think “These are the prince’s robes of fine Benares cloth. He surely couldn’t have murdered the prince for the sake of these robes!” Just as they are about to go after him, they see Chandaka returning with the horse Kaṇṭhaka, and he confirms the exchange of robes, at which point the divinity (again!) goes to the divine world, carrying the robes on his head. See Lefmann 1902-1908: 228.13-229.4, translated in Foucaux 1884: 199-200; Tibetan in Foucaux 1847: 198.7-18, translated in Foucaux 1848: 217, and see Bays 1983: I.341-342.

⁵⁰ I am not entirely sure about the implied antecedent here. It might make a bit more sense to suggest that the whole series of events up to this point, and not just the miraculous retailoring of the clothing, is what is due to the super-powers of the bodhisattva and gods. However, in the *Zhongxu mohedi-jing* T. 191 (III) 947c6 it is indeed explicitly this retailoring that is at issue.

⁵¹ Reference is made to the establishment of a *kāśimaha* in the printed text of the *Rudrāyaṇavadāna* of the *Divyāvadāna* (Cowell and Neil 1886: 579.8; disturbingly the text is printed ... *mahaś ca pratiṣṭhāpitaḥ kāśimaha kāśimaha iti saṃjñā saṃvṛtā* — the length of the *-i-* vowel being unclear). But note that Nobel 1955: 102, n. 2 and 99, n. 1 has questioned this reading, since the Tibetan (*khar* [read ‘khar?’] *phor*) and Chinese (*xiaotongzhan* 小銅盞) translations support the emendation **kāmśikamaha* (brass cup festival). Although he also pointed to the Chinese translation, the reason offered long before by Huber 1906: 15, n. 3, for the same emendation is far from convincing: “*Kāçikā* est corrompu; il ne peut pas s’agir non plus de *kāçika*, «vêtement fin de Bénarès», puisque c’est juste le contraire de *kāçāya* et qu’un moine ne peut pas en posséder.” (Cp. Agrawala 1966: 70.)

⁵² On this stock expression, see Schopen 1996: 93, n. 31.

referred to. Having mentioned the stūpa marking the spot where Chandaka is said to have left the bodhisattva, and returned alone to the palace, the *Datang Xiyu ji* 大唐西域記 refers to a tree, and goes on:⁵³

By the side of this [tree] there is a small stūpa. This is the place where the prince exchanged his remaining precious robe for a robe of deerskin. The prince had already cut off his hair and exchanged his lower garments, and although he had gotten rid of his precious ornaments and bangles, he still had a divine garment. “This clothing,” he said, “is extremely extravagant. How can I exchange it?” At that time a Śuddhāvāsa god manifested himself as a hunter wearing robes of deerskin, holding a bow and carrying arrows.⁵⁴ The prince raised his garment and spoke to him, saying: “I would like to trade. Please be good enough to assent.” The hunter said “Okay.” The prince loosened his upper garment and gave it to the hunter. The hunter took it, resumed his divine body, and holding the garment he had taken, rose into the air and departed. Beside [the stūpa] of the prince’s exchange of garments,⁵⁵ and not far distant, there is a stūpa built by King Aśoka; this is the place where the prince shaved his head.

It is unclear to me upon what source Xuanzang might have based his idea that the robe worn by the hunter was made of deerskin, but as far as I know this is not stated explicitly in any known Indian text. The existence of an oral account told to Xuanzang in India is naturally a likely hypothesis, although the appearance of the word in Dharmarakṣa’s version of the *Lalitavistara* might somehow be related.⁵⁶ In any case,

⁵³ T. 2087 (LI) 903a8-16 (*juan* 6) = Ji 1985: 532-533. The text is translated in Mizutani 1988: 147 and Beal 1906: II.30, upon which I have based my own translation of the text in Ji’s critical edition.

⁵⁴ This must be the meaning, as Beal has it (“quiver”), but perhaps by synecdoche? 持弓負羽, literally “holding a bow and carrying feathers on his back.” Mizutani 1988: 147: 弓を持ち矢を背負った.

⁵⁵ The expression 太子易衣, “the prince’s exchange of robes,” may conceal a version of the name given to the stūpa in the texts translated above, *kāṣāya(prati)grahaṇa*.

⁵⁶ The term is found in both the old translation of the *Lalitavistara*, the *Puyao-jing* 普曜經 T. 186 (III) 508b5 (*juan* 4), and the *Taizi ruiying benqi-jing* 太子瑞應本起經 T. 185 (III) 475c27-29 (*juan shang*). While the *Taizi ruiying benqi-jing* has been shown by Matsuda 1988 to be a Chinese “patchwork,” partially in fact based on the *Puyao-jing*, both texts most certainly far predate Xuanzang’s time, and thus are of some potential relevance to the question. (Zürcher 1991: 284 attributes the compilation and re-editing of T. 185 to Zhi Qian.)

The term is also found in the writings of Daoxuan 道宣, for example T. 2122 (LIII) 560b1 (*juan* 35); see Shinohara 2000: 309. Daoxuan’s versions of the story are in

the term would seem to be rather out of character at least with later Indian and Chinese Buddhist sensibilities, although it is a reference which would be sure to thrill any Japanese Yamabushi who might notice it.⁵⁷

As I have suggested above, the story of Kāśyapa's acquisition of Śākyamuni's rag robes is important not only because it serves to certify the legitimate origins of the robe which Kāśyapa will later on pass on to Maitreya, but also because the robe is a symbol for the ascetic life of Kāśyapa himself. It is significant, even crucial, then, that it is a rag robe, a *pāmsukūla*, that Kāśyapa obtains in trade from the Buddha.⁵⁸

This argument, however, is complicated by the fact that this is not the only tradition about the robe. Lacking any good idea of even relative chronologies for most of our source materials, we are reduced in some cases to simply cataloging the data, but certain patterns do seem to emerge out of the chaos.

Canonical Buddhist literature contains a well-known story of the Buddha's aunt and foster mother, Mahāprajāpatī, attempting to present to the Buddha a set of new, fine clothes she herself had made. Most versions of this story label the robe a garment of golden threads or fine embroidery.⁵⁹ In the canonical accounts the Buddha refuses to accept the

general, from an Indian textual point of view, highly conflated. For extensive details, see Shinohara's study.

⁵⁷ In addition, of course, the skin of a deer, or more properly an antelope, and usually a particular black antelope, is of especial importance in the Vedic traditions.

⁵⁸ I may note here that I cannot follow Faure's suggestion (1995: 337) that *pāmsukūlakāśāya* "literally" means "robe to sweep excrement," nor his further suggestion that it is "probably an abbreviation for 'robe [composed of tattered cloths, which have been used] to sweep [all kinds of junk, including] excrement.'" (He may have got this idea from the nearly identical claim in Seidel Forthcoming.) Clearly the source of this (mis)understanding is not the Indic term but the Chinese equivalent *fensao* 糞掃, characters the meaning of which is literally "excrement-sweep." However, despite what is stated by Mochizuki 1932-1936: 4496c, for example, as pointed out by Nakamura 1981 s.v. *funzōe* (1201d), the characters are a transcription of *pāmsu*, not a translation at all — the Early Middle Chinese reading of the term after Pulleyblank 1991 is *pun^h-sav^h* (or *-sav^h*). The literal meaning of the Chinese words is not mentioned at all by the lexicographer Huilin 慧琳 in his *Yiqiejing yinyi* 一切經音義 T. 2128 (LIV) 372a2-5 (*juan* 11).

⁵⁹ The *locus classicus* is found in *Majjhima-nikāya* iii.253,4 et seq. (sutta 142, *Dakkhiṇāvibhaṅgasutta*), where the technical term is *dussayuga*. In Chinese the text is found in the (Sarvāstivāda) *Madhyamāgama* T. 26 (180 瞿曇彌經) (I) 721c25ff. (*juan* 47) with the expression 新金縷黃色衣, and in the *Fenbie bushi-jing* 分別布施經 T. 84 (I)

robes personally, and suggests to Mahāprajāpatī that she donate them to the community instead.⁶⁰ Other texts, of uncertain but undoubtedly later date, continue the story, but the conclusion contains a twist: Mahāprajāpatī wanders into the assembly looking for a monk to accept the robes, and all refuse — except Maitreya.⁶¹ This version, which omits Kāśyapa completely, provides a more direct link between Śākyamuni and Maitreya. This may be based, at least in part, on the version in the *Pūrvāparāntaka-sūtra* of the *Madhyamāgama*, in which the Buddha directly hands over to Maitreya the golden robe received from Mahāprajāpatī, although he asks Ānanda to fetch and give it to him first.⁶² Similarly so based is the account in the **Abhidharma Mahāvibhāṣā*.⁶³

903b29ff. which renders 新製衣. See also the Mahīśāsaka Vinaya T. 1421 (XXII) 185b19ff. (*juan* 29), and the Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya *Kṣudrakavastu* T. 1451 (XXIV) 391b20-21 (*juan* 37) and following, where the term is 上新細縷黃金色製. The corresponding Tibetan (Derge Kanjur 6, 'dul ba, da 260a6) has the term as *ras bcos bu sar pa gser gyi mdog ltar ser*.

⁶⁰ In the *Chuyao-jing* 出曜經 T. 212 (IV) 691b14-16 (*juan* 15), for instance, the Buddha makes the explicit statement to Mahāprajāpatī that the robes are not to be presented to him alone since he is just one member of the whole community 夫欲施者當詣大眾。何爲獨向我耶。吾亦是大眾之一數。 According to Tomomatsu 1932: 104, this is an indication of Mahīśāsaka influence. See also Tomomatsu 1970: 87ff. However, in the Mahīśāsaka Vinaya T. 1421 (XXII) 185b24 (*juan* 29), the Buddha accepts one of two robes offered to him, the other going to the saṅgha. This seems to strongly contradict the Mahīśāsaka principle that donated goods belong to the monastic community as a whole since the Buddha is simply one monk among others; see Tomomatsu 1932: 88ff., and Silk 2002a.

⁶¹ This is the resolution in the so-called Sūtra of the Wise and the Fool, *Xianyu-jing* 賢愚經 T. 202 (57) (IV) 434a6-25 (*juan* 12), and in the *Zabaozang-jing* 雜寶藏經 T. 203 (50) (IV) 470a15-22 (*juan* 4). See Demiéville 1920: 164; Lévi 1932: 363 for a summary of the former, and Chavannes 1911: III.46 and Willemen 1994: 112-113 for translations of the latter, on which see also Kagawa 1963: 119-122. The close connection between the two versions was noted by Lévi 1932: 365, and Kagawa 1963: 222. The Pāli *Anāgatavaṃsa Aṭṭhakathā*, attributed to one Upatissa, names Ajita as the recipient. See Lévi 1932: 365-366, Jaini 1988: 62-63, and Chit Tin and Pruitt 1992: 18-19. There has been considerable discussion concerning the relation between Ajita and Maitreya, but for our purposes they may be treated as equivalent. See particularly Filliozat 1950, and Kagawa 1963: 232-236.

⁶² T. 26 (66 說本經) (I) 511b1-5 (*juan* 13) = *Gulai shishi-jing* 古來世時經 T. 44 (I) 830b26- 29. See Demiéville 1920: 162-163; Lévi 1932: 361-363, and Lamotte 1958: 780.

⁶³ T. 1545 (XXVII) 894a17-28 (*juan* 178). Sakurabe 1965: 42 notes that although the text is quoted at length the sūtra name is not given. See also Kagawa 1963: 225. I may just note here that I believe Sakurabe 1965: 42 has misunderstood the *Vibhāṣā* at 894a26 when he takes the expression 佛上首僧 to mean the Buddha and the head of the saṅgha, as

A radically different resolution is provided by Xuanzang, who may have conflated various stories, or may have known a version which had attempted to synthesize several apparently disparate traditions. In Xuanzang's account, the Buddha gives to Kāśyapa the golden robe presented to him by Mahāprajāpatī, and it is this robe which Kāśyapa presents to Maitreya.⁶⁴

The *Ekottarikāgama* presents yet another variation, which combines concerns with asceticism, future decline, the transmission of the teaching and the authority of its two greatest transmitters. It begins with the same text as the *Saṃyutta-nikāya sutta* referred to above, in which Kāśyapa insists on following the strict practices to which he has become accustomed, but the story then continues differently. Here both Kāśyapa and Ānanda are charged with preserving the teaching.⁶⁵

“Kāśyapa, you should know that after my nirvāṇa, in a thousand years plus, there will be monks who retreat from the practice of concentration, who will not carry out the dhuta ascetic purification practices, will not beg for food or wear the rag robes. They will greedily accept invitations from householders, and accept robes and meals from them. They will not dwell in quiet places beneath trees, but will delight in ornamented residences. They will not use urine and feces as medicines, but will only use other extremely sweet medicinal herbs. Some among them will be greedy for material goods but will be stingy about their residences, and will constantly quarrel among themselves. At that time, donors and benefactors with deep faith in the teaching of the Buddha will delight in charity, attaching no importance to material goods. And at this time, those donors and benefactors, after their deaths, will attain rebirth in heaven, while those monks through their indolence will, upon death, fall into hell. Just so, Kāśyapa, all conditioned things are impermanent and do not last long.

if they were two different persons. It means the Buddha *as* the head of the saṅgha (**buddhapramukha* [*bhikṣu*]saṅgha).

⁶⁴ The relevant passage is in Xuanzang's *Datang Xiyu ji* 大唐西域記 (T. 2087 [LI] 919b29-c21 (*juan* 9) = Ji 1985: 705-706, translated in Beal 1906: II.143-144, Watters 1915: II.143-146, Mizutani 1988: 214). The difference from the other versions was pointed out by Lamotte 1944-1980: 193, n. 1, and the same apparent contradiction had been noticed by Watters 1915: II.145. It is possible that there is some connection here with the Mahīśāsaka tradition, noted above, that the Buddha did accept a robe from Mahāprajāpatī. I must therefore correct my earlier denial (1994: 61) that any such tradition exists, a denial that unfortunately was noticed and cited by Adamek 2000: 74. See now Silk 2002a.

⁶⁵ The whole text is T. 125 (35.5) (II) 746a21-c24 (*juan* 35), and the portion translated here is 746b9-c24.

“Again, Kāśyapa, you should know that in a future generation there will be monks who shave their hair and beards but nevertheless engage in domestic activities. On the left they grasp at boys, on the right they grasp at girls. With flute and lute they beg for alms in the cities and villages. [Even] at that time the donors and benefactors will receive merit without limit. How much more so today with genuine alms beggars? Just so, Kāśyapa, all conditioned things are impermanent and do not last long.

“Kāśyapa, you should know that in a future generation if there are śramaṇa monks who will reject the eight-fold path and the seven factors conducive to welfare,⁶⁶ the jewel of the teaching which I have accumulated over three immeasurable aeons of practice will be to those future monks as a song.⁶⁷ Among groups of people they will beg for alms [only] to preserve their lives. But those donors and benefactors will feed that group of monks, and still they will obtain merit from that. How would they not receive merit [for feeding genuine monks] today? Now I take this teaching and confer it upon the monks Kāśyapa and Ānanda. The reason why this is so is that now I am old and facing my eightieth year. It will not be long before the Tathāgata enters nirvāṇa. So now I take the jewel of the teaching and confer it upon these two people. They should memorize it well, recite it and hold it, not cutting it off but spreading it to the world. Those who would intercept and stop the preaching of the Sage shall quickly land in the border regions.⁶⁸ Therefore, do not allow the sūtra teachings that I entrust to you today to perish!”

At that time Mahākāśyapa and Ānanda got up from their seats and, making a long bow and joining their hands together, spoke to the Blessed One: “Why is this teaching of the sūtras transmitted to the two [of us], and not transmitted to other people? Among the Tathāgata’s contingent the disciples with supernatural powers are beyond calculation. Still, you do not transmit the teaching to them.”

The Blessed One said to Kāśyapa: “I cannot see among the gods and men individuals equally capable of receiving and upholding this jewel of the teaching as are Kāśyapa and Ānanda. Neither are there any superior to these two among the auditors. In the past, buddhas also had these two persons to receive and uphold the sūtra teachings, but it was exceedingly rare that they were as great as the present day monks Kāśyapa and Ānanda. The reason for this is that the monks who practiced the dhuta ascetic purification practices under past buddhas existed as long as the teaching existed,

⁶⁶ Chinese reads 七種之法; I translate under the assumption that this renders *sapta-aparihāṇīya-dharma*, but this is not certain.

⁶⁷ Hence their willingness to beg with flute and lute?

⁶⁸ I am not sure I have correctly understood this sentence at 746c-2-3: 其有過絕聖人言教者便為墮邊際.

and perished when it perished. But now my monk Kāśyapa will stay long in the world. When Maitreya appears in the world, then he will pass into nirvāṇa. For this reason the present day monk Kāśyapa is superior to the groups of former monks. And why is the monk Ānanda superior to former attendants? In past times the attendants of all buddhas listened to what others said and then understood it. But these days the monk Ānanda already understands even before the Tathāgata speaks. Even what the Tathāgata does not say he knows thoroughly. For this reason the monk Ānanda is superior to the attendants of all former buddhas. Therefore, Kāśyapa and Ānanda, I now transmit to you, I pass on to you this jewel teaching. Do not allow it to perish!”

And at that time the Blessed One uttered a stanza:

All conditioned things are impermanent.

They arise and must certainly perish.

What is free of birth is then free of death.

The extinction of those [conditioned things] is the supreme happiness.⁶⁹ And then Kāśyapa and Ānanda having heard what the Buddha preached rejoiced and upheld the teaching.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ The verse is the first true verse of the *Udānavarga*, the two previous to it being verses of homage: *anityā bata saṃskārā utpādavyayadharmiṇaḥ | utpadya hi nirudhyante teṣāṃ vyupaśamaḥ sukham* ||. It is frequently found in Indian Buddhist texts.

⁷⁰ We may note, for what it is worth, that traditional sources, representing of course ideology rather than history, but for that no less interesting or important, maintain that relations between Ānanda and Mahākāśyapa were not good. This issue has been studied, although with a certain historical credulity, by Hiraakawa 1981: 150-157. He draws our attention to numerous passages in which Kāśyapa frankly states his severe criticism of Ānanda. See also Kumoi 1953; Tsukamoto 1963; Nagasaki 1983: 451-453; 459.

G. Schopen has drawn my attention to a passage in the *Saṅghabhedavastu* of the Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya which contains what is, in the present context, an extremely interesting and potentially revealing contrast. There (Gnoli 1977-1978: ii.62.13) Ānanda states as one of his conditions of service to the Buddha that he will not wear the Buddha's robe. Or at least that is what the passage seems to say: *nāhaṃ bhagavato nirvasanaṃ cīvaraṃ dhārayeyam*. This is rendered in Tibetan (Derge Kanjur 1, 'dul ba, nga 153a7) as: *bcom ldan 'das kyi na bza' smad g-yogs dang chos gos bdag gis mi bcang ba dang*. Gnoli speculates (p. 62, n. 4) that *nirvasana* may be equivalent to *nivāsana* which, to be sure, *smad g-yogs* may render. But if *nirvasana* / *nivāsana* is to be taken as a noun, the syntax is very hard to understand. It may be that we should read **nivāsanaṃ cīvaraṃ vā*, although the Tibetan gives no support for this. Nor does it support the idea that we might emend to **nivasta-cīvara*, which however would also yield a good sense, namely that Ānanda will not wear clothes which had been worn by the Blessed One. Moreover, the reason given here for Ānanda not to wear the robes is not that the robes are saturated with the Buddha's spiritual power, but so that Ānanda might avoid the possible future accusation that he has undertaken to serve the teacher for the sake of robes, that is, material gain (Gnoli 1977-1978: ii.63.2-3). Rockhill's summary (1907: 88) has muddled things a bit.

Going even farther, we may note that on occasion it is not even necessary for the robe to be involved in the story at all. The **Abhiñiṣkramaṇa-sūtra* and the **Mahāprajñāpāramitopadeśa* contain the same story of Kāśyapa, but it is only Kāśyapa's relics (*śarīra*) or skeleton which remain, undisturbed and clothed in the *saṃghāṭi*.⁷¹ A yet further step is taken by the *Divyāvadāna*, borrowing directly from the Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya. Here it is related that it is only Kāśyapa's skeleton which Maitreya will encounter and reveal when he opens up the mountain in which Kāśyapa is interred, without any reference to the robe at all.⁷² All of these stories, despite their differences, agree in placing great emphasis on the essentially physical connection between Maitreya and Kāśyapa, and through Kāśyapa to Śākyamuni.⁷³

Finally, we might remark here an interesting account which, while concerning Kāśyapa, Maitreya, and Śākyamuni's transmission of his

We might also note here that the Chinese translation of the entire discussion (T. 1450 [XXIV] 167a1-3) seems to be either drastically abbreviated or, less likely, corrupt.

⁷¹ **Abhiñiṣkramaṇa-sūtra* T. 190 (III) 870a24-b25 (*juan* 47). This is the text studied by Beal 1875, but he has not translated the episodes of Kāśyapa and his robe. See pp. 318-320. See also the **Mahāprajñāpāramitopadeśa* T. 1509 (XXV) 78c27-79a16 (*juan* 3) and following, translated in Lamotte 1944-1980: 193-195. Some of the wording of the **Abhiñiṣkramaṇa* seems to be very close to that of the *Divyāvadāna*. The **Abhiñiṣkramaṇa* passage was remarked by Sakurabe 1965: 39.

⁷² *Divyāvadāna* (Cowell and Neil 1886: 61.22-29; also printed in Leumann 1919: 174) = Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya *Bhaiṣajyavastu* T. 1448 (XXIV) 25a25-b2 (*juan* 6). Virtually the same account is found in the *Mile xiasheng chengfo-jing* 彌勒下生成佛經 T. 454 (XIV) 425c2-13. The latter is translated by K. Watanabe in Leumann 1919: 236. See too T. 453 (XIV) 422c4.

⁷³ Jaini 1988: 75 has said much the same thing, in regard to the last passage: "The *Divyāvadāna* story of the Tathāgata Maitreya's noble act of honoring the remains of the elder Kāśyapa was no doubt motivated by a desire to establish a physical connection, if not a direct line of transmission, between the Buddha of the present and the Buddha of the future."

It is a question we cannot address here whether there is some implication to be drawn from the coincidence of Kāśyapa's name with that of Kāśyapa Buddha, the most prominent of the buddhas of the past. In the versions of our stories found in the writings of Daoxuan, which it is beyond the scope of the present study to examine, Śākyamuni receives his robe from a tree deity who had been given it indeed by the past buddha Kāśyapa. See Shinohara 2000: 309, and T. 2122 (LIII) 560b1-4 (*juan* 35); T. 1892 (XLV) 808a3. Whether this might represent some version circulating in India I cannot say, but it does not appear to be attested in any known Indian text. (Just as a note, I wonder whether Daoxuan's tree deity manifesting himself 樹神現身 might not point to some confusion of the story, mentioned above, of the Śuddhāvāsa god who manifests himself — but as a hunter — near the tree at the root of which the robe had been placed.)

teaching into the future, seems to invert some of the patterns we have observed above. In the *Maitreyamahāsimhanāda-sūtra*, Kāśyapa is portrayed as a self-consciously limited disciple, who declines the Buddha's charge to defend the teaching in the bad days to come. Instead, Kāśyapa insists that he is a “disciple (**śrāvaka*) of limited practice (**prādeśikacaryā*) and limited wisdom (**prādeśikaprajñā*), without companions and unable to last long in the world.”⁷⁴ Having declined to himself undertake the role of protector of the teaching, Kāśyapa nominates the bodhisattva Maitreya:⁷⁵

Blessed One, although I am not able to completely carry out those tasks and deeds which bodhisattvas carry out, since this bodhisattva, mahāsattva Maitreya, Blessed One, has come here to this very assembly and is present, the Blessed One should speak to him. When in later days, later times, in the last five hundred years, the True Teachings are going to be destroyed, he will uphold and propagate this complete and perfect awakening perfected by the Tathāgata over innumerable aeons. Why? Because, Blessed One, this bodhisattva, mahāsattva Maitreya will awaken to unexcelled perfect awakening after the Tathāgata.

Maitreya then accepts the charge he received directly from the Buddha that he defend the teaching in the future. Here we have a very

⁷⁴ In Tibetan, Li-thang *dkon brtsegs*, ca 86a1-2; Peking 760 (23), *dkon brtsegs*, zi 67b1-2; sTog 11.23, *dkon brtsegs*, ca 160b7; Tokyo manuscript 33-23, *dkon brtsegs*, ca 132a8-b1: *nyan thos nyi tshe bar spyod pa nyi tshe ba'i shes pa dang ldan pa zla bo ma mchis pa yun ring por mi gnas pa*. (Approximately one folio [recto-verso] of text is missing between Phug brag 114a5-6.) In Chinese *Mohe jiashe-hui* 摩訶迦葉會 T. 310 (23) (XI) 503b8-10 (*juan* 88).

⁷⁵ In Tibetan, Li-thang *dkon brtsegs*, ca 86b4-8 [L]; Peking 760 (23), *dkon brtsegs*, zi 68a4- b1 [Q]; Phug brag 54, *dkon brtsegs*, ca 114b1-6 [P]; sTog 11.23, *dkon brtsegs*, ca 161b5-162a3 [S]; Tokyo manuscript 33-23, *dkon brtsegs*, ca 133a4-8 [T]: *bcom ldan 'das bdag gis ni byang chub sems dpas [QT dpa'] gang yongs su sgrub [PT bsgrub] par bgyid pa'i bgyi de dang don de yongs su sgrub par rngo mi thog [P thogs] lags kyi bcom ldan 'das byang chub sems dpa' sems dpa' chen po byams pa 'di [QL ø] 'khor 'di nyid du 'dus [P dus dor du 'dus] te mngon du [P par] mchis [T 'chis] lags pas bcom ldan 'das kyi 'di la bka' stsal cig dang [T ø] 'dis ni slad ma'i tshe slad ma'i dus lnga brgya pa [P ø] tha ma la dam pa'i chos nub par 'gyur ba'i dus kyi tshe na de bzhin gshegs pas bskal pa bye ba grangs ma mchis par yang dag par [P pa'] bsgrubs [P bsgrub] pa'i bla na med pa yang dag par rdzogs pa'i byang chub 'di 'dzin par [S pa] 'gyur rgyas par bgyid [L bgyed] par 'gyur lags so de ci'i slad du zhe na bcom ldan 'das 'di ltar byang chub sems dpa' sems dpa' chen po byams pa 'di ni de bzhin gshegs pa'i 'og tu bla na med pa yang dag par rdzogs pa'i byang chub mngon par rdzogs par 'tshang rgya bar 'gyur ba lags pa'i slad du ste . In Chinese *Mohe jiashe-hui* T. 310 (23) (XI) 503b25-c2 (*juan* 88).*

interesting case which, while it initially may strike one as contradictory, in some ways might, in fact, be seen as congruent with the other stories we examined above. For although the Buddha is made to transmit his teachings directly into the care of Maitreya, nevertheless the facilitator of that transmission, the means through which Śākyamuni comes to Maitreya, remains Kāśyapa. The *Maitreyamahāsimhanāda* is an interesting and perhaps unusual text from a number of points of view,⁷⁶ but despite its variant treatment of the story of Śākyamuni, Kāśyapa and Maitreya, I do not see the pattern recognized above being radically broken even here.

It is perhaps worthwhile noticing that the stories of the robes of the Buddha and of Kāśyapa and Mahāprajāpatī, if not also Maitreya, might be treated from a number of different points of view, in addition to those I have chosen to emphasize here. Tomomatsu Entai has, for instance, devoted over two hundred pages of detailed discussion to the question of the economic implications of Mahāprajāpatī's gift of robes, as interpreted in different strata of Buddhist literature.⁷⁷ It is beyond the scope of the present study to pursue this approach in any detail, but it bears keeping in mind that Tomomatsu has made a convincing case for the hypothesis that the various different presentations of the same basic story reveal important aspects of the respective doctrinal positions of the texts and schools considered.⁷⁸

The question with which we began is why Kāśyapa may have been selected as a prominent figure by the authors of certain early Mahāyāna texts, and I proposed the hypothesis that what Kāśyapa's presence provides, in addition to a verification of the centrality of asceticism and a strictly pure monastic vision, is a type of continuity of authority and

⁷⁶ The only detailed treatment of this text I know is Schopen 1999. Schopen is preparing a Tibetan edition and English translation of the complete text from Tibetan. I am grateful to him for sharing his draft translation with me. See also Ōno 1954: 104-105; Mino Kōjun 美濃晃順 in Ono 1932-1935: 10.249b-250b; and Shimoda 1991b; 1997: 292-298.

⁷⁷ The Japanese half of Tomomatsu 1970 is entirely devoted to the question of Mahāprajāpatī's gift of robes to the Buddha.

⁷⁸ Tomomatsu has, consequently, discussed many of the sources mentioned above, but since I intend to address Tomomatsu's approach in some detail in a separate study in the near future, I have not cited his work extensively here.

legitimacy. Buddhist notions of history and what is important historically are interesting and complex, but one thing at least is clear. Linear history of the type to which we are accustomed is not as important, generally speaking, as the passage of cosmic, spiritual time. And in this way of thinking, ages meet and past and future are joined, often toward the end of emphasizing one or another aspect of Buddhist doctrine or ideology. Among the most important of such connections is that between the present age of the Buddha Śākyamuni and the future dispensation of the Buddha Maitreya. The bodhisattva Maitreya, who will in the future become a Buddha, after an indeterminate time (although specific numbers of years are assigned by various traditions), is nevertheless imminent even now as a bodhisattva. It is this which, in one sense, links him with Śākyamuni, but the tradition also provides another means of linking the teaching of the Buddha Śākyamuni with that of the future Buddha. The agent of that connection is Kāśyapa, and the medium of the connection is the robe of Śākyamuni.⁷⁹

⁷⁹ There is no need to enter here into the deeply significant role the relation between the Buddha and Kāśyapa played in East Asian Buddhism, nor the special extended meaning of the transmission of the robe in, particularly, Chan and Zen traditions. See for this issue among recent studies Seidel Forthcoming, Faure 1995, Foulk 1999 and Adamek 2000.

In China Kāśyapa is of course made into the first transmitter of Chan traditions (the first patriarch), most notably through the story of Śākyamuni's flower and Kāśyapa's smile. It seems however that this story has nothing Indian about it, and perhaps first appears with its full significance as late as the Song period (twelfth century) in the apocryphal *Dafantianwang wenfo jueyi-jing* 大梵天王問佛決疑經, and then famously in the *Wumenguan* 無門關, kān 6. See Komazawa Daigakunai Zengaku Daijiten Hensanjo 1985: 659b. An earlier version, which does not however completely draw out the implications of the encounter, is found in Li Zunxu's 李遵勗 *Tiansheng guangdeng-lu* 天聖廣燈錄 of 1036, while the source of the lineage list beginning with a personal transmission from Śākyamuni to Kāśyapa is the *Baolin-zhuan* 寶林傳 of 801. Moreover, this text also mentions the story that Śākyamuni gave Kāśyapa a robe along with the transmission of the formless dharma, that robe to be passed along to Maitreya. For an excellent and richly detailed study of these traditions, see Foulk 1999; cp. Welter 2000. The Indian sources which contributed to the quite late establishment of a Chan lineage beginning with Kāśyapa are investigated by Wang 1997.

I cannot resist here pointing out the irony that near the end of his lengthy discussion of Matsumoto 1911, Peri 1911: 457, devoting less than a page to Matsumoto's *Daruma* 達摩, a work on Bodhidharma and the history of Chan, remarked in defence of this imbalance that "the subject [= Bodhidharma and Chan Buddhism] is of less general interest than that of the preceding [= Matsumoto's Maitreya book]." Certainly times have changed.

It would certainly be possible to think of the age of Maitreya only in terms of a time which remains future for us today, a “messianic” age still to come.⁸⁰ And indeed this is the prevalent interpretation of the Maitreya story (or myth or legend) among Buddhists themselves of almost every age and place. But the story raises some interesting possibilities, one of which I would like to consider here.

We can speculate: When the early Mahāyānists first began to be aware of their teaching as a revision, even a reactionary revision, of the teachings of their contemporary co-religionists, they no doubt felt the necessity, not only doctrinally but also historically, legendarily and mythically, of associating, even identifying, their teachings with those of the universally acknowledged authentic and legitimate Buddha, Śākya-muni. It is my suggestion that one method some of them chose was to employ the myth of the disciple Kāśyapa, particularly by introducing him as a prominent interlocutor in their scriptures. Not merely does Kāśyapa represent anti-laxist tendencies within the monastic community by virtue of his status as first among the upholders of the dhuta ascetic purification practices; he is also in essence the temporal heir of the Buddha, the bearer of the Buddha’s imprimatur, or even a second Buddha. This marks him as the epitome of the orthodox non-innovator. Additionally, and I suggest not coincidentally, it is he who conveys the pith of the teaching to the future buddha, Maitreya.⁸¹ As a further

⁸⁰ I am aware that the use of the term “messianic” in the context of Maitreya may not be entirely appropriate, at least as far as the Indian Maitreya is concerned. But for a general discussion I think it will not be misleading and, in any case, one could make a very strong case that in East Asia at least the term is perfectly applicable.

⁸¹ I do not disregard the fact that the legends equally record Kāśyapa as “transmitting the Law” to Ānanda, his living successor, but I think the two legends are not mutually exclusive. They refer to two distinct levels of discourse, or two different “histories.”

Note that Hiraakawa 1981: 162 doubts this story on the grounds that, since Ānanda was, like Kāśyapa, a direct disciple of the Buddha, there would have been no reason for Ānanda to receive the teaching from Kāśyapa. I think that Hiraakawa has failed to appreciate the possibility that “dharma transmission” is being conceived of here as a unilinear event. Since Kāśyapa had received the transmission, no one else could. (Perhaps this is something like the Japanese Rinzai Zen model in which a Rōshi makes no more than one dharma transmission, as opposed to the Sōtō model of multiple transmissions.) We also should recall in this context that, as noted above, for some traditions at least Kāśyapa is the Buddha’s legal heir.

Namikawa 1999, clearly influenced heavily by Hiraakawa 1981, appears to want to make the case that, as I understand him, largely due to differences in their respective

extension, I submit that the authors of Mahāyāna scriptures which invoke Kāśyapa arrange that Śākyamuni, through the medium of Kāśyapa, confer legitimacy not only on Maitreya but, by implication, on all future preachings of the Buddhist Dharma, of which their own scriptural creations are then a relevant example. Although Maitreya is yet to come, and we as audience find ourselves in a period intermediate between the dispensations of Śākyamuni and Maitreya, still we are not unaffected by Maitreya's pending presence. For the authors of the Mahāyāna scriptures which employ him, Kāśyapa as the proxy guarantor — as proxy for Śākyamuni himself — of the orthodoxy and orthopraxy of the post-Śākyamuni Buddhist teaching is the chosen representative of the future of Śākyamuni's Dharma. By invoking Kāśyapa, the authors of those Mahāyāna texts in which he appears tried to avail themselves of his aura of legitimacy, orthodoxy and authenticity, and his potency to legitimize and authenticate.⁸² In

death stories, Ānanda persisted as the religious leader of the monastic community after the Buddha's death, while Kāśyapa isolated himself inside a mountain therefore cutting himself off from the continuing monastic heritage. I confess to having some trouble following Namikawa's argument, and look forward to his promised further detailed exposition of his hypothesis.

Finally, we may note that the sub-commentary to the *Aṅguttara-nikāya*, *Sārathamañjūsā* (attributed to Sāriputta, on whom see von Hinüber 1996: §375), states that Kassapa will live until the age of 120 and that when the Buddha dies Kassapa will dwell in the Sattapaṇṇi cave; collecting the Dhamma and Vinaya he will make the Buddha's teaching last for 5000 years. It is for this reason that the Buddha appoints Kassapa as his successor rather than Sāriputta or Moggallāna, for example. (In the edition of the Dhammagiri-Pāli-Ganthamālā the passage is §1.1.191 [on LXIV.4], found in part 1, p. 140; in Pecenko 1997: 179-180.) The Sattapaṇṇiguhā is a cave on Mount Vebhāra in Rājagaha outside of which the First Council was held, and the expression "collecting the Dhamma and Vinaya" in the commentary refers to that Council. Although Ānanda is not mentioned, at least for this text the choice of Kassapa as the true heir of the Buddha is not only crystal clear, but strictly connected with his role as convener of the Council. In the Pāli Vinaya too (Oldenberg 1880: 188,35-36), the Buddha states that he will not pass on the monastic community to Sāriputta or Moggallāna (much less to Devadatta). See Lamotte 1944-1980: 1673-4 for the same in the **Mahāprajñāpāramitopadeśa*.

⁸² To be sure, there are certainly other modes through which Mahāyāna scriptures trace their legitimating lineages. One brings to mind immediately the legend of Nāgārjuna obtaining the Prajñāpāramitā scriptures from the Nāga kingdom, and the appeal to the authenticating witness of the Buddha Prabhūtaratna in the opening passages of the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka*. Regarding the first of these, see Lamotte 1944-1980: 941, n. §c.

non-Mahāyānist scriptures Kāśyapa plays the role of transmitter of legitimacy to Maitreya, or since correctly speaking Maitreya's legitimacy as a full and perfect Buddha is self-produced, conveyor of Śākyamuni's approval and acknowledgment. There is nothing Mahāyānist about this. What the authors of Mahāyāna scriptures did is make use of this mythology to appropriate for their own revelations this logic of authentic and acknowledged Buddhist teachings. Following this line of thought, the teachings presented as taught to Kāśyapa in Mahāyāna scriptures implicitly become those Śākyamuni especially intended for and sent forth into the future age. Yes, the Mahāyāna authors acknowledge and must acknowledge, of course these teachings differ from those known from earlier literature, but these, our teachings, are at the same time orthodox and congruent with tradition and truly the teachings for a future time.⁸³ Kāśyapa is simultaneously the guarantor of a strict orthodoxy, working to counter implications of illicit innovation, and courier of that orthodoxy to future ages, up to and including the far future of Maitreya. And although we the audience for these scriptures are not yet living in the age of Maitreya himself,

⁸³ And of course, again, this is not the only way in which this is done. The concept of *upāya*, widespread but perhaps most famously exhibited in the parable of the three carts and the burning house in the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka*, aims to explain the existence of three separate approaches to the doctrine (or two, if the *pratyekabuddha* is really a complete fiction), while emphasizing the superiority of the Mahāyāna.

Although I do not know that the story is appealed to in any Mahāyāna scripture, the Pāli Vinaya account of Purāṇa who arrived in Rājagṛha after the First Council has long seemed to me a potential justification for scriptural diversity. Informed that the Council has settled the canon of Sutta and Vinaya, the monk Purāṇa, who did not attend, replies "Reverends, the Elders have well recited the dhamma and the vinaya, and yet, I will uphold them just exactly as I have heard and received them directly from the Blessed One." (Cullavagga XI.11; Oldenberg 1880: 290,6-8.) Such a history, sanctioned by its preservation in canonical scripture, might have permitted later Buddhists to accept the authenticity of works even if they were not transmitted within the otherwise authorized canons. At the same time, I am aware that the parallels in other vinayas do not quite support this radical reading. See the Mahīśāsaka Vinaya, T. 1421 (XXII) 191c19-192a5 (*juan* 30), translated alongside the Pāli in Pryzluski 1926-1928: 159-161; the Dharmaguptaka Vinaya T. 1428 (XXII) 968b26-c16 (*juan* 54), translated in Pryzluski 1926-1928: 195-198; and the **Vinayamāṅgikā* T. 1463 (XXIV) 819a3-29 (*juan* 4), translated in Pryzluski 1926-1928: 196-200 — and also see his pp. 319-322.

his pendent presence at the end of the cord strung by Śākyamuni toward him nevertheless helps us to gain access to some of the teachings Śākyamuni intended for the future. Since the line from Śākyamuni to Maitreya runs through Kāśyapa, the presence of Kāśyapa may permit us to encounter the scriptures and thus the legitimization, or vice versa, transmitted from Śākyamuni through him to Maitreya. In other words, since Kāśyapa is the carrier of Śākyamuni's teachings, and consequently his imprimatur, or his imprimatur and consequently his teachings, by accessing Kāśyapa, which is to say by introducing him into a set of newly composed scriptures, the authors of these scriptures invoke for their compositions the authority of the sanction Śākyamuni destined for the future. The future for which that sanction was originally destined was the unreachable future of Maitreya, but the Mahāyāna sūtra authors arrogate it for their creations through the introduction into those texts of Kāśyapa, the bearer of that sanction and thus its vessel. And this access means that we need not be satisfied with the old, partial and incomplete revelation. The Mahāyāna texts contain precisely the "new dispensation," to borrow Conze's expression, the fuller and more complete truth, and one aspect of the authority and legitimacy of these teachings is that they are bonded toward a future time by a courier whom the authors of some Mahāyāna scriptures reanimate in their time and on their own terms.

It is in light of this reasoning that I offer the hypothesis that Kāśyapa appears as the Buddha's interlocutor in various Mahāyāna sūtras as a means of invoking the legitimizing charisma of a history and legend well established in Buddhist lore, and widely understood to symbolize a combination of crucial qualities: purity in practice, which certifies orthopraxy, leadership of the monastic community and arbitration of the limits of its sacred canon, which guarantees orthodoxy, and a link with the future, which draws these validations into the time of the authors. The authors of the Mahāyāna texts provided a legitimating context for their statements by putting them into the mouth (or the ears) of Kāśyapa, strict follower of the dhuta ascetic purification practices, the Buddha's hand-picked heir, and the agent of his affirmation of authentic Buddhist teachings yet to come.

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SUMMARY

This study offers a speculative hypothesis regarding the prominent role assigned to the monk Kāśyapa in many Mahāyāna sūtras. It suggests that two prime factors contributed to this prominence: first, the fact that Kāśyapa is regarded as the quintessential practitioner of serious asceticism, symbolized by his affinity

for humble rag robes, and second, that Kāśyapa is also known as the individual who will transmit the legitimacy of Śākyamuni Buddha's teaching to the age of the future Buddha Maitreya. Through his orthodox, even reactionary, position, Kāśyapa assures that the (actually innovative) Mahāyāna authors who employ him in their scriptures cannot be accused of unwarranted innovation. Simultaneously, since he is already known as the messenger who will transmit the Buddhist teaching into the future, these Mahāyāna authors, aware of their position, can imply that the very teaching they present is that entrusted to Kāśyapa, and thus a legitimate legacy of Śākyamuni's preaching.

Key words: Mahāyāna, Kāśyapa, ascetism, authority of Mahāyānasūtra

RÉSUMÉ

Dans cet article nous présentons un essai d'interprétation portant sur le rôle éminent que le moine Kāśyapa joua dans plusieurs Mahāyānasūtra. Deux facteurs semblent avoir concouru à faire de Kāśyapa la figure de proue que l'on sait. Tout d'abord, le rôle de Kāśyapa comme parangon de l'ascétisme, stigmatisé par le port du froc en haillons. D'autre part, son rôle de passeur: Kāśyapa est en effet le garant de la transmission de l'enseignement authentique du Buddha Śākyamuni au temps du futur Buddha Maitreya. Connus pour ses penchants à l'orthodoxie et à l'orthopraxie, Kāśyapa est ainsi le faire valoir des auteurs des Mahāyānasūtra face à ceux qui les accuseraient d'introduire un enseignement nouveau et injustifié. Tout à la fois, Kāśyapa étant bien connu pour son rôle de passeur de l'enseignement aux temps futurs, les auteurs des Mahāyānasūtra, conscients de leur position précaire face à l'orthodoxie, peuvent revendiquer le fait que l'enseignement (nouveau) qu'ils présentent est celui qui fut confié à Kāśyapa, autrement dit l'enseignement authentique légué par Śākyamuni.

Mots clefs: Mahāyāna, Kāśyapa, ascétisme, autorité des Mahāyānasūtra