Dreaming the path: diagnosing Bodhisattva progress in early Mahāyāna

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Chapter 1
The *Svapnanirdeśa*: The Content

The *Svapnanirdeśa* (lit., "Teaching on Dreams") is a Mahāyāna sūtra on the ten *bhūmi*s that characterize a bodhisattva's progress toward enlightenment. Before treating the central issue of these stages of enlightenment, we must address the immediate problem posed by the work itself: the work is shrouded in obscurity in terms of both text and context. As this dissertation is largely based on the study of the *SvN*, understanding its text and textual history is a task of the utmost priority.

The scripture exists only in two translations: one Chinese, the other Tibetan. The Chinese translation is filled with semantic and syntactic puzzles to the extent that it is nearly unintelligible. The Tibetan text is less problematic, but there we also frequently encounter difficult terms and expressions.

If we turn to primary sources to enlighten us on these difficult readings, we find out, unfortunately, that no one has ever composed a substantial commentary on this work. Intertextual references or parallels in Indic sources are nonexistent; quotations of it in Chinese sources are scarce. In addition, though the *SvN* has been cited in a few important Tibetan treatises, very few of them have considered the text exegetically and,[1] as seen in the case of Sapaṇ's *A Clear Differentiation of the Three Codes* (Rhoton 2002, 148–149), it is sometimes singled out as an atypical text.[2]

Moreover, while the task of dating any Indian Mahāyāna scripture is already difficult enough, in the case of the *SvN*, the historical backgrounds of both translations are enigmatic as well. We do not know in which doctrinal tradition or which period we should situate the text.

Finally, very little modern scholarship features this text as its main subject. In many articles that briefly discuss the work, the two *juan* of Chinese or three *bam po*s of Tibetan words are oversimplified into just a few sentences, and many problems are overlooked.

Therefore, in the following part, I will invite you, the reader, to "discover" the text from the perspective of its content and textual history.

[1] Another important Tibetan treatise that cites the *SvN*—the *bSam gtan mig sgron* by gNubs chen Sangs rgyas ye shes—only provides a rough paraphrase of the *SvN*, and since the author makes no comment on the *SvN*, it is not clear why the author includes the *SvN* in his discussion of the gradual progress of a bodhisattva (Miyazaki 2006, 22−23). See my previous footnote (Introduction, n. 74) for more details on this work and its citation of the *SvN*.
[2] Sapaṇ's comments on the *SvN* will be discussed extensively in Chapter 5.

Materials: Work, Translations, and Witnesses

As an abstract work, this sūtra exists on several levels.

Work

In this study, I will refer to the work as the *Svapnanirdeśa*, its Indic name as recorded in the colophons of Tibetan Kanjurs.[3] In doing so, I take the sūtra to be a Buddhist scripture with a presumed Indic origin. In this dissertation, I use the concepts of "the work" and "the text" (i.e., as opposed to the Tibetan text or the Chinese text) interchangeably to refer to the *SvN* on an abstract level. As Silk discusses (2015, 210), the concept of a "work" exists only in the imagination; more concretely, what I present in this study is an instantiation of the work as based on the critical editions of the received witnesses in both languages. This question must be treated with greater care when it concerns a text with multiple versions, such as the *Dbh*. However, since the *SvN* has only two translations, which largely overlap, when I refer to "the work," I am mainly referring to the readings of the Tibetan critical edition. When the Chinese translation or any of the witnesses challenges the evidence of the Tibetan edition, I clarify this in a footnote.

Translations and Witnesses

The work exists in two translations:

The Chinese translation, titled *Jingju tianzi hui* 淨居天子會 (lit., "Section on the Deities of the Pure Abodes"), is traditionally ascribed to *Dharmarakṣa (Zhu Fahu 竺法護).[4] However, based on evidence both external (catalogs) and internal (linguistic style and vocabulary), the attribution to Dharmarakṣa appears to be a mistake. Most pre-Tang catalogs record the translator as "lost" or "unknown."[5] The lexicon and

[3] An alternative Sanskrit name, **Ārya-śodhana-nirdeśa* (lit., "The Teachings of Pure [Abode Deities]"; Chn. 阿唎二合 亜稅怛拏儞哩二合 底沙二合 拏麻) is attested in the Yuan Dynasty catalog *Zhiyuan fabao kantong zonglu* 至元法宝勘同總錄 (in the *Shōwa hōbō sōmokuroku* 昭和法寶總目錄 [1929] 1983, Tokyo: Taishō shinshū daizōkyō kankōkai, II: 184). I favor the name *Svapnanirdeśa* over *Śodhananirdeśa*, as the latter is problematic in three respects: 1) it is not representative of the content of the text; 2) though it is close to the sūtra's current Chinese name, *Jingju tianzi hui* 净居天子會, the Chinese name as recorded in earlier catalogs and manuscripts, *Pusa meng jing* 菩薩夢經, is closer to *Svapnanirdeśa*; 3) this Yuan Dynasty catalog is not reliable; I will provide evidence of the unreliability of this catalog in Appendix I, n. 15. I will discuss the issue of the sūtra's name in full detail in the same appendix.

[4] Following Zhisheng's *Kaiyuan shijiao lu* 開元釋教錄 (T. 2154, 584b3), almost all the extant Chinese witnesses ascribe the translation to Dharmarakṣa. The only exception is the witness now preserved at the Imperial Palace in Japan (which belongs to the Chongning 崇寧 edition), which follows Fei Changfang's 費長房 catalog and records the translator of the *Jingju tianzi hui* as unknown.

[5] See *Kaiyuan shijiao lu*, T. 2154, 584b5–6. This issue will be discussed at length in Appendix I, which focuses on the textual history of the Chinese translation.

linguistic style strongly suggest that the translation was produced after the fifth century,[6] or, more precisely, between 515 and 576, though this entails much guesswork based on the catalogs.[7] The Chinese translation was included as the fourth text of the *Mahāratnakūṭa* (Chn. *Da baoji jing* 大寶積經, hereafter MRK) collection, compiled between 706 and 713 by Bodhiruci.[8] In the same period, the name of this translation was changed from *Pusa meng jing* 菩薩夢經 (lit., "Sūtra on the Dreams of Bodhisattvas")[9] to the current name, *Jingju tianzi hui*, for an unknown reason, probably related to its inclusion in the *Da baoji jing* collection.

The Chinese translation is witnessed by all the printed *Dazang jing* editions and a few manuscripts. For the critical edition, based on earlier studies on the Chinese canons, I have chosen the Second Edition of the Korean (Koryŏ) Canon 再雕高麗藏 as a base text and consulted the Sixi 思溪藏, Qisha 磧砂藏, Zhaocheng Jin 趙城金藏, and Fangshan 房山石經 editions. Two manuscripts are available to us: a fragmentary Dunhuang manuscript (date unknown) and one that belongs to the Shōgozō collection 聖語藏 (740).[10] They have all been utilized in this study.

The Chinese translation is problematic. First, as already pointed out by Mitsukawa (1982, 125–130), it is incomplete.[11] Secondly, it is both semantically and syntactically vague.[12] Therefore, the Chinese text does not serve as the primary source for this study.

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[6] For example, the usages of *rushi wo wen* 如是我聞 and *niepan* 涅槃 indicate that this translation was produced after the late fourth century, as a universal shift in terminology took place around the year 400 (Zürcher 1996, 2–3; Funayama 2007, 243–44; Nattier 2014, especially 53–55, 56).

[7] The year 515 is when Sengyou 僧祐 completed his compilation of *Chu sanzang jiji* 出三藏記集, in which no title resembling *Jingju tianzi hui* or the text's earlier title, *Pusa meng jing*, can be found; 576 is roughly the year when Fashang 法上 finished the *Qishi zhongjing mulu* 齊世眾經目錄, a catalog that is now lost. Fashang's catalog is the earliest known evidence of this translation (see Zhisheng's reference to this catalog, T. 2154, 584b6). The questions raised by the Chinese catalogs are more complicated than those listed here. See Appendix I on this issue.

[8] Zhisheng's notes under the *Baoji* section make it clear that regarding the sūtras that were translated before the compilation (of the MRK). He also claimed that Bodhiruci checked them against the Sanskrit manuscripts and only included them when they were confirmed to align with the Sanskrit manuscripts (T. 2154, 584a17–19; for my translation of the passage in question, see n. 6 in Appendix I). According to Zhisheng, the Sanskrit manuscripts of the *SvN*, along with other chapters of the MRK collection, were brought back from India by Xuanzang during the Zhenguan 貞觀 era (627–649) (T. 2154, 570b4–5; for more details, see also Forte 2002, 97–98). But the anecdote that Xuanzang has brought the Sanskrit manuscript from India to China appears hardly credible; see Silk 2019, 231, n. 7, Silk and Nagao 2022, 689−690.

[9] Or *Pusa shuomeng jing* 菩薩說夢經, as recorded in T. 2154, 584b2–6. The syntax of this name is rather perplexing; for a detailed discussion, see Appendix I, especially n. 4. The title *Pusa meng jing* is recorded in several early catalogs, as well as in Zhisheng's citation of previous works; see T. 2154, 665b7−8 and T. 2154, 698a4. Further, according to several studies, the old Buddhist manuscripts preserved at Nanatsu-dera 七寺 and Shōsōin 正倉院 include some manuscripts called *Pusa meng jing* that are reported to be identical with the *Jingju tianzi hui*. Though these manuscripts are unfortunately not accessible to us, the very fact that they exist already provides us with some insight into the textual history of the Chinese translation. This shows that the *Pusa meng jing* was probably the best-recognized title of the Chinese translation before its inclusion in the MRK collection.

[10] Besides these two manuscripts, several manuscripts from among the "old Buddhist manuscripts in Japanese collections" (*koshakyō* 古寫經) are known, but are not currently available to us. Those mentioned in the above note, i.e., the manuscripts preserved at Nanatsu-dera and Shōsōin with the title *Pusa meng jing*, are among the most important ones. We shall return to the issues concerning the old Buddhist manuscripts preserved in Japan in Chapter 2 (n. 9) as well as in Appendix I.

[11] The comments on Dreams 1, 2, 45, and 58 are missing; since the dreams themselves are found in list of dreams in both translations, it is more likely that either the manuscripts on which the Chinese translation was based lack those parts, or that those passages were overlooked by the Chinese translators.

[12] Despite promising recent studies on the syntax of early medieval Buddhist translations (Anderl 2017, 692), I still consider it difficult to judge whether a Chinese translation is problematic or not, as we have relatively few tools for

A Tibetan translation, (*'phags pa*) *rMi lam bstan pa*, is recorded as having been translated by the Indian master Prajñāvarman and the Tibetan translator Ye shes sde.[13] This attribution and early catalogs allow us to date the text to a period between the late eighth century and the early ninth century.[14] However, except for the date, we are not informed of any other facts about the historical circumstances of the translation. The Tibetan translation is also included as the fourth text of the Tibetan version of the MRK collection (*dKon mchog brtsegs pa chen po'i chos kyi rnam grangs*).[15]

The translation is witnessed by virtually all the Kanjurs and several important canonical collections. For the critical edition that is included in this thesis, I have collated the readings from the Derge, Lithang, Ulaanbaatar, and Hemis Kanjurs as well as the Basgo, Tabo, and Gondhla collections. The reason behind my choice of Kanjurs will be discussed in the appendices.

The Tibetan translation, though posing some challenges to comprehension, is largely intelligible. It is for this reason that my English translation is based on the Tibetan text.

As outlined above, the historical contexts of both translations are obscure; we know of no definite date or translator for either of them, and the reason for their inclusion in the MRK collection remains a mystery. The ambiguity of the *SvN*'s textual history prevents

understanding these medieval translations. As summarized by Greene (2022, 137−138), "Filled with perplexing syntax, strange vocabulary, and odd transcriptions of foreign words that frequently do not appear in modern dictionaries, the very earliest Chinese Buddhist texts are often extremely difficult to read even for modern Buddhologists armed with parallel Indic versions and later Chinese or Tibetan translations of the putatively same text. Otherwise skilled readers of classical Chinese literature, and even experienced readers of later Chinese Buddhist literature, often find these texts downright incomprehensible." I will list several linguistic features of this translation that I believe have created many difficulties in understanding the text: 1) the Tibetan text clearly marks the "causes" of a bodhisattva's karmic obstruction with ergative particles and the "antidote" of an obstruction or the instruction to overcome an obstacle with verbal noun + "*bya ba*." However, though the Chinese also sometimes distinguishes the causes and antidotes with "故" (because) and "應" (should), the usages are very inconsistent; 2) pronouns are often unclear or simply absent; 3) some sentences do not make sense syntactically in the Chinese text, but align completely with the Tibetan text in terms of vocabulary (e.g., Dream 73, Tib. *sa gong ma pa dag gis ni thams cad phun sum tshogs par mthong ste / las kyi sgrib pa dang / mngon par mi brtson pa ni ma gtogs so*; Chn. 除魔業不勤進上地相見一切具足; see my translation of this sentence in Appendix III §73b), and can only be understood with the aid of the Tibetan text. Therefore, it is certainly easier for us to simply read the Tibetan translation than decipher the Chinese. The vocabulary used in this translation, on the other hand, seems quite standard—i.e., we can find the meaning (and possible Indic form) by consulting other Chinese translations from the same period.

[13] There are many mysteries surrounding Ye shes sde. There is no reliable biography of him, and there are many doubts regarding the huge number of translations attributed to him (Rhaldi 2002 lists 347 translated works that are attributed to him). For example, Zimmermann (2000, 191) finds that there is "a tendency to substitute colophons with famous names for ones with less well-known names," and Ye shes sde is one such famous name. Horiuchi (2021, 50–51) has observed some inconsistency in terms of vocabulary and style among the works attributed to Ye shes sde, though he argues that this inconsistency is also possibly due to later revisions. Rhaldi (2002, 21) has further found that some references to Ye shes sde are interchangeable with another name, Vairocana. Therefore, the historical context of this Tibetan translation is quite obscure.

[14] Two important early catalogs that were compiled in the ninth century, namely, the lHan kar ma catalog and the 'Phang thang ma catalog, both include the *rMi lam bstan pa* (See Herrmann-Pfandt 2008, 19 §28 and Kawagoe 2005, 11 §107 respectively). For a full examination of the catalogs including the *rMi lam bstan pa*, see Appendix II.

[15] For example, as in the colophon of the Derge edition, "Chapter 4 of the Noble Dharma Discourse, Collection of Jewels, in hundred thousand chapters" (Tib. *'phags pa dkon mchog brtsegs pa chen po'i chos kyi rnam grangs le'u stong phrag brgya pa las le'u bzhi pa ste,* D48, *dkon brtsegs, ka*, 203b1). For a detailed discussion of colophons of this translation in different witnesses and my remarks on those witnesses, see Appendix II.

us from contextualizing our further discussion within the proper doctrinal or historical background. Some may even ask, how can we ascertain that there *was* an original Indic work? Indeed, we do not possess even a single fragment of the Indic text, and there is no parallel passage that can be found in the Chinese or Tibetan canons. Given that we have nearly exhausted our external evidence for the *SvN*, the only hope of learning more about its possible composition history and doctrinal background lies in the text itself.

Before undertaking a comparison of the *SvN* and other Mahāyāna scriptures to determine its possible composition history and doctrinal background, we first need to understand its structure and content.

Content: Diagnostic Dream Manual

Overall Structure

The *SvN* is a dream manual enveloped in a sūtra frame. The text starts and ends with a highly standardized Mahāyāna sūtra formula, which perhaps embodies its sūtra identity. But the core of the text is what I call a "diagnostic dream manual": a manual intended to help individual bodhisattvas identify their current developmental stage by examining their dreams. Below is a rough sketch of the content of the *SvN*:

Opening. The scene opens in a rather formulaic way: "thus have I heard at one time," the Buddha entered into concentration (**samādhi*) on Vulture Peak in Rājagṛha. By the power of such concentration, deities, bhikṣus, and bodhisattvas were attracted to the Blessed One, and they requested to hear this "teaching on the signs (**nimitta*) of bodhisattvas." When the Blessed One remained silent, Bodhisattva *Vajrapramardin (Tib. rDo rjes rab 'joms; Chn. 金剛摧)[16] repeated the request anew, which was now

[16] Neither the Tibetan name of this bodhisattva "rDo rjes rab 'joms" nor the Chinese equivalence "Jin'gang cui" 金剛摧 appears elsewhere in their corresponding canons. I propose to reconstruct the Sanskrit name as *Vajrapramardin, based primarily on two reasons: 1) "Vajrapramardin" is one of the thirty-five Buddhas to confess to in the extant Sanskrit version of the *Triskandhaka* (Kimura 1980, 189; also cited in the *Śikṣ*, on which see Bendall 1902, 169.7). By using "Vajrapramardin," I want to highlight the connection between the *Triskandhaka* and the *SvN*, which will be discussed later in this chaper; 2) even if we take only linguistic evidence into consideration, Skt. *pramardin* is one of the most plausible Indic forms that underlie Tib. *rab 'joms* (*rab tu 'joms pa*) (e.g., in the *Lalitavistara*, Tib. *bdud kyi bu bdud rab tu 'joms pa zhes bya ba,* D95, *mdo sde, kha*, 155a7 corresponds to Skt. *mārapramardako nāma māraputraḥ*, on which see Hokazono 2019a, 380.6; for more examples, see Negi 1993–2005, 6216–6217) and Chn. 摧 (Hirakawa 1997, 557–558). Esler (2012, 320) reconstructed the name as Vajravidāraṇa without any explanation. However, I would rather avoid establishing a connection between "Vajravidāraṇa" and the bodhisattva in the *SvN*, as 1) a series of iconography and worship programs have been developed around Vajravidāraṇa, especially in the Saptavāra tradition (see Bühnemann 2014, 126–7, and Tamura Shuei's series of articles on the *Vajravidāraṇa-dhāraṇī* from 2008 to 2020, especially the introduction provided in Tamura 2008). It is better to avoid confusion between this Tantric deity and the protagonist of our text. However, it is indeed possible to draw a connection between "rDo rjes rab 'joms" and the *Vajravidāraṇa-dhāraṇī*, as the *dhāraṇī* text also claims to be intended for those who dream inauspicious dreams (Tib. *rmi lam sdig pa mthong na*, D750, *rgyud, dza*, 266b4; Chn. 夢見不吉祥, *Huaixiang jin'gang tuoluoni jing* 壞相金剛陀羅尼經, T. 1417, 933a11); 2) Vajravidāraṇa is rendered as "rDo rjes rnam par 'joms pa" (D750, *rgyud, dza*, 265a) in Tibetan and "Jin'gang Cuisui" 金剛摧碎 (tr. Cixian 慈賢 in Song Dynasty, *Jin'gang cuisui tuoluoni* 金剛摧碎陀羅尼, T. 1416, 931b3) or

made by praising the Buddha in verses. The Buddha then replied with a sentence that can be taken as a summary of the entire sūtra: "Vajrapramardin, you should know that an individual is on the bodhisattva's path (**bodhisattvayānika pudgala*) by 108 signs."[17]

Dream manual. Then begins the main body of the *SvN*, consisting of a dream manual. The Buddha first provides a list of the contents of the 108 dreams. In the following passages, I will refer to the dreams by their order in the list, from Dream 1 to Dream 108.

This list is followed by comments that elaborate on each dream. The order and content of the comments correspond to those of the list; each comment follows the same fixed formula, though in many cases only roughly. To better illustrate this, I present one typical comment—that of Dream 89—as an example. This comment can be divided into two parts: a "Part A," which constitutes the main theme and principal explanation of the dream, and a "Part B," which functions as a subsection of or appendix on the main theme. Further, it provides the following six categories of information: 1) the main theme of the dream and the range of stages (*bhūmi*) it represents; 2) the karmic obstruction suggested by the dream; 3) the antidote to this karmic obstruction; 4) the

"Huaixiang jin'gang" 壞相金剛 (tr. Shaluoba 沙囉巴 in Yuan Dynasty, T. 1417, 932a16) in Chinese. Tib. *rab* is more often a rendition of the Sanskrit prefix *pra-* than *vi*. Therefore, until further research or materials can provide new evidence on the Sanskrit equivalent of "rDo rjes rab 'joms," I will use "Vajrapramardin" in the *SvN* to emphasize the text's deep bond with the *Triskandhaka* tradition. Note that in the *Triskandhaka*, "Vajrapramardin" is a Buddha, while in the *SvN*, he is "only" a bodhisattva, and the versions of the *Triskandhaka* referred to in earlier Chinese translations mention no exact names of the thirty-five Buddhas. The connection between the buddha Vajrapramardin and the bodhisattva Vajrapramardin here is only hypothetical; see my discussion on the *Triskandhaka* below for more details.

[17] The text specifically designates bodhisattvas as Skt. **bodhisattvayānika pudgala* (Chn. 菩薩乘人, Tib. *gang zag byang chub sems dpa'i theg pa pa*), i.e., individual bodhisattvas who adhere to the bodhisattva vehicle. This term appears mostly in the Prajñāpāramitā literature and several times in the MRK collection. Among the Prajñāpāramitā literature, we frequently encounter this phrase in the *Aṣṭa*. Occurrences can be found in Wogihara 1932−1935, I: 322.20–21, 332.9−13, etc. It is interesting to note that the expression *bodhisattvayānika pudgala* is relatively rare in the *Pañca*, while the phrase "good sons and daughters of the bodhisattva vehicle" (Skt. *bodhisattvayānika kulaputra kuladuhitṛ*) appears more frequently; see, e.g., Kimura 1986–2009, IV: 27–28. In the MRK collection, the Chinese equivalent of this term, 菩薩乘人, appears many times: e.g., T. 310 (6), 110c28–29; T. 310 (24), 516c19–a22; T. 310 (25), 520a24–b13; T. 310 (36), 573a1. Mäll (2005, 56) differentiated the meaning of *bodhisattvayānika*, *bodhisattva*, and *bodhisattva mahāsattva* in the *Aṣṭa* by claiming that the former two kinds of bodhisattvas "only appear in the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā* on a few occasions and even then mainly in the situations where a bodhisattva renounces the *Prajñāpāramitā* and tries to read Hīnayāna texts." It is probably true that we should pay attention to the nuanced meaning of these three terms, as they also appear to be differentiated in the *Shanzhuyi tianzi hui* 善住意天子會, T. 310 (36), 572c–573c (here, only Mañjuśrī is designated as *bodhisattva mahāsattva*, but it is hard to tell how the other two are distinguished from each other). It is also perhaps true that *bodhisattvayānika pudgala* indicates these individuals are not yet as "great" as *bodhisattva mahāsattva*. For a discussion on the meaning of *mahāsattva*, see Kajiyama 1982, 261−266. As Kajiyama points out, Haribhadra explains that the term *bodhisattva mahāsattva* implies that "Mahāyāna *bodhisattvas* must be more than mere *bodhisattvas*" (ibid., 266). However, in the case of the *SvN*, the three terms seem to be interchangeable (esp. in Chinese, T. 310 [4], 81a27–b01). This term is also discussed by Harrison (1987, 72–73) as the most frequently encountered designation of bodhisattvas in the context of the *Aṣṭa*, but without much attention paid to its nuanced meaning. Watanabe, on the other hand, discusses this term with a focus on its relationship with *buddhayānika* in the *Prajñāpāramitā* literature, and he concludes that the two terms are interchangeable in the *Aṣṭa* (2013, 27−29), as both refer to the third vehicle of the three vehicles. Watanabe (ibid., 31−34) further argues that the term *bodhisattvayāna* is a later development and it replaced *buddhayāna* in many cases. In the case of the *SvN*, it is hard to say whether the term *bodhisattvayānika* shows traces of later development. The term also refers to a monastic specialty, on which see Nattier 2003, 274, 276, but this meaning is irrelevant to this context.

resulting prognosis; 5) variations on the dream's main theme and the corresponding *bhūmi*s they may indicate; and 6) exceptions or additional remarks, often associated with the deeds of Māra.

> **Part A: 1)** Vajrapramardin, if, in a dream, a bodhisattva perceives himself being smeared with an impure substance, that bodhisattva should be regarded as being in the first three *bhūmi*s. **2)** Since he was an unruly bodhisattva who spoke ill of the noble ones, **3)** he should recite the teachings according to [the Dharma discourse of] *The Three Heaps* (**Triskandhaka*)[18] for three years; he should have great conviction in it (i.e., the *Triskandhaka*) and he should not lack true faith in it. **4)** Then that karmic obstruction of his will be cleared away, and he will also certainly proceed to enlightenment.
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> **Part B: 5)** If his whole body is smeared with dirty mud, he is in the first *bhūmi*. If [only] one side of his body is smeared (with impurity), he is in the second *bhūmi*. If the limbs and extremities of his body are smeared (with impurity), he is in the third *bhūmi*. **6)** For those in any *bhūmi* of the first six *bhūmi*s, the deeds of Māra (**māra-karman*) are involved.[19]

Closing. After explaining the 108 dreams, the text reaches its concluding sūtra frame. The Buddha ends the text with some verses. However, the verses do not serve as a reiteration of the main topic (i.e., the signs of bodhisattvas); rather, they center on how the conduct of people is unfathomable, and therefore they seem to be detached from the main contents.[20] The verses are followed by a concluding remark that echoes the beginning of the text: once again, it addresses those bodhisattvas who have not yet realized their karmic and demonic obstructions and were about to give up their pursuit of the bodhisattva career before hearing this teaching. Finally, the text ends in a formulaic sūtra fashion: deities, human beings, asuras, and gandharvas are all satisfied with this teaching.

Thus is the outline of the text. The text features a symmetrical structure that shows some degree of intentional organization: introduction—verses—main content—verses—concluding remarks. The sūtra frame wraps up the dream manual, not only structurally but also conceptually. Despite the clichés (which are also vital in terms of asserting its

[18] Tib. *phung po gsum pa*. Here, the Chinese text further specifies that the recitation of this Dharma discourse is considered a "confession" ritual and should take place "in three divisions in the daytime and three divisions in the nighttime" (Chn. 晝夜三時勤修懺悔). Further discussion on the *Triskandhaka* is to follow.

[19] For the corresponding Tibetan and Chinese, see §89ab in my edition.

[20] The verses are not straightforward, and both translations pose difficulties in understanding; therefore, it is not easy to offer a summary. Nevertheless, a tentative English translation of these verses will be provided in Appendix III.

canonicity), the sūtra frame also makes several important self-declarations. The purpose is clearly stated at the beginning as follows:

> (We ask to hear this teaching on the signs of bodhisattvas) so that, even when the Blessed One has passed into *parinirvāṇa*, when future bodhisattvas listen to this Dharma discourse, they will have immense zeal for unsurpassable, complete, and perfect enlightenment. Also, when they know their own merits as they truly are, they will not show pride toward others. They will neither be careless because of ease nor feel discouraged because of difficulties.[21]

Echoing the above passage, at the end, the intended audience is described as bodhisattvas "who were inclined to regress from enlightenment, frightened, dejected, full of uncertainty, doubtful, inclined to go back to the state of householders, and they did not realize the deeds of Māra or their karmic obstructions."[22] In other words, the target audience is disheartened monks[23] who are pursuing the bodhisattva path, but face obstructions primarily from the interference of Māra and karmic obstructions. Upon hearing this teaching, all those bodhisattvas will abandon their faults and resist Māra's interference. They will finally attain perfect and complete enlightenment together with the bodhisattva Maitreya.

In this way, the *SvN* directly addresses discouraged bodhisattvas in a post-Buddha period. It repeatedly stresses the importance of "knowing": they should know their own merits, the deeds of Māra, and karmic obstructions, and it is this knowledge that prevents bodhisattvas from regressing. Underlying the importance of "knowing" is the anxiety of "not knowing"; such anxiety drives the main body of the work, a diagnostic dream manual that allows bodhisattvas to obtain insight into their conditions through dreams.

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[21] For the Tibetan and Chinese texts, see §VIII in my edition.

[22] For the Tibetan and Chinese texts, see §LIV in my edition.

[23] By describing the target audience of the text as "being inclined to go back to the state of householders (Tib. *khyim gyi gnas*, Skt. **gṛhāvāsa*)," it is quite clear that, at least here, the intended audience is bodhisattvas who have already given up their household status. However, this issue is not always treated straightforwardly in this text; for example, in Dream 43, the sentence "he will come forth (Tib. *rab tu 'byung bar 'gyur*) for the sake of the roots of merit and return (home) again" seems to suggest the bodhisattva in question is not yet a monk, but it could also refer to the next life; in Dream 18, however, the expression "after he became a monk (Tib. *rab tu byung nas*), out of hypocrisy, he criticized the Dharma; he should recite the Dharma Discourse of the *Three Heaps* day and night for a month" could refer either to a past life or to previously in this lifetime. I am inclined to understand the intended audience as bodhisattvas who have become monks, based on the total absence of any regulation or mention of householder life—avoidance of wine, women, luxury, etc.—in this text. However, I must admit that we cannot definitively say that the *SvN* solely intends to instruct bodhisattvas who are already monks. In addition, although the text does not specify the target audience as exclusively male, this can be assumed. First, in early Mahāyāna, "women cannot attain buddhahood, and even the title of *bodhisattva* is withheld from them" (Harrison 1987a, 79; see also Nattier 2009, 90). The *SvN*, by designating the dreamer as a "bodhisattva," is likely to have excluded women from the discussion. Second, although there are rare cases that a woman could receive the prediction to buddhahood, an irreversible bodhisattva can only be a man (Fronsdal 1998, 245−246). The *SvN*, by frequently promising the audience these high attainments without specifying a possible female-to-male transformation, should be considered exclusively for men. For this reason, in my translation and discussion of this sūtra, I use "he/him" when referring to bodhisattvas.

Below, I offer a detailed discussion of the dream manual. By appropriating the notion of a "diagnosis"—namely, identifying a person's disease (condition) by examining his symptoms (signs)—we see bodhisattvas in the *SvN* as in an imagined medical examination. As such, my analysis of the dream manual will be split into the following parts: 1) signs or symptoms, i.e., dreams; 2) conditions, i.e., bodhisattva *bhūmi*s and associated obstructions as well as achievements; 3) treatment, i.e., instruction;[24] and 4) prognosis after treatment. The first step, then, is to see what the text says about each category.

Signs

The title of the *Svapnanirdeśa* makes it clear that the work revolves around dreams. But how does the work see dreams?

As quoted above, the text also calls itself "a teaching on the signs of bodhisattvas" at the beginning. The Tibetan *mtshan ma*[25] and Chinese

相 indicate that the underlying Sanskrit is mostly likely *nimitta.*[26] Therefore, the work sees dreams as *nimitta*s, a word that is usually translated as "signs." While the term is frequently used interchangeably with *liṅga* or *ākāra* in Mahāyāna scriptures,[27] its nuanced meaning will help us understand the nature of dreams in this text, especially considering that the *SvN* never explicitly explains the mechanism of the diagnostic dreams it includes.

Among the rich meanings of *nimitta* in different contexts,[28] two are of special interest for this study: first, dream content is commonly designated as *nimitta*s in an Indian divinatory context. This is true in both theoretical works on omens, such as treatises of Jyotiḥśāstra, and extensive narrative works, such as the *Lalitavistara*, when

[24] Campany (2020, 88), who also adopts these medical terms to summarize the text, calls treatment the "prescription of practices to remove whatever karmic blockage is evidenced by the dream."

[25] Though *mtshan ma* is also once used side by side with other synonyms—"you should know by what dispositions (*rnam pa*), marks (*rtags*), and signs (*mtshan ma*) an individual is adhering to the bodhisattva vehicle" (for the Tibetan text, see §XXII in my edition)—it is the term *mtshan ma* that is emphasized throughout the text.

[26] Other scholars may disagree; for example, Campany (2020, 88) reconstructs the Sanskrit as *lakṣaṇa*. The reason that I prefer *nimitta* to other words—words that could also be translated as "signs," such as *lakṣaṇa* or *ākāra*—besides the general association between *nimitta*s and dreams in Indic Buddhist literature, is mainly based on the *Mahāvyutpatti* (*Mvy*, hereafter). According to *Mvy.* 6774 and 7582 (for the numbering, I follow Ishihama and Fukuda 1989), *msthan ma* is used exclusively for translating *nimitta,* while *lakṣaṇa* is usually translated as *mtshan nyid* (*Mvy*. 6942), and *ākāra* as *rnam pa* or *byad bzhin nam tshul* (*Mvy*. 6553).

[27] For example, in the *LP*, Gilks (2009, 8, n. 25) lists the instances of *nimitta*, together with its synonyms *ākāra* and *liṅga*, with their Chinese and Tibetan counterparts when discussing the signs of non-returning (*avaivartika*) bodhisattvas in the *Pañca* (i.e., Chapter 17). The translations suggest they are interchangeable and all point to the meaning "characteristics," though some commentators—for example, Haribhadra—interpret *nimitta* specifically as "correct evidence" (ibid., 8).

[28] Citing the *Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*, "among its several denotations, three especially deserve attention": first, that it indicates "the generic appearance of an object" in epistemological discourse; second, that "*nimitta* refers to an image that appears to the mind after developing a certain degree of mental concentration" in the context of meditative cultivation; and third, that it denotes the "four 'signs,' 'sights,' or 'portents,' which were the catalysts that led the future buddha Siddhārtha Gautama to renounce the world" (Buswell and Lopez 2013, 585–586).

referring to dreams that predict future events.[29] What distinguishes a *nimitta* from other omens, namely, from *adbhuta* and *utpāta*,[30] is that it can be either auspicious or inauspicious (Chavan 2017, 36; Baur 2023, 251). Secondly, *nimitta* is used in a broad Buddhist meditation context as "visions" obtained from meditation. *Nimitta* is used in this sense in the Pāli textual tradition (Anālayo 2003, 178−179); in scriptures circulated in Central Asia, such as the *Yogalehrbuch* (Seyfort Ruegg 1967, 165); and in texts related to *buddhānusmṛti* (Deleanu 2002, 14−15), as well as in medieval Chinese meditation scriptures (Greene 2021b, 77). In these texts, visionary signs (*nimitta*s) obtained through meditation generally serve as confirmation of meditative achievements.

In this way, the term *nimitta* links the *SvN* with two contexts. The first context shows that dreams are seen as being of an inherently prognostic value when they are designated as *nimitta*s. The second may seem irrelevant to the *SvN* at first glance, but the mechanism behind *nimitta*s is similar in both the *SvN* and meditative texts: *nimitta*s are visions that confirm spiritual achievements.

Thus, according to this analysis of the term *nimitta*, being described as *nimitta*s, the dreams recorded in the *SvN* are intended to be diagnostic or prognostic tools. Besides this terminology, some other traits shared by the dreams in this text are also important. First, there is no clue as to the circumstances of these dreams. By "circumstances," I mean additional information on the time of dreaming, rituals before dreaming, etc. In fact, the text never deals with what precedes dreaming, but only what follows the dreams. Secondly, while the majority of the 108 dreams are only described as visions (which matches the fact that the text uses mostly the verb "to see" for dreams),[31] sometimes the audible aspects of dreams are also mentioned. This perhaps does not tell us much, since "to see" (Skt. √*dṛś*) is the default verb paired with dreams in the Indian context. As Young (1999, 9) states, such usage implies that "the dreamer is the passive recipient of an objective vision." Though this is perhaps true to some extent, Indian

[29] E.g., in Chapter 14 of the *Lalitavistara*, "he—resplendent on account of his merits, respected, and filled with radiance and splendor—respected for his merits and glory and filled with radiance and splendor sees these foregoing dream signs" (Skt. *so* [*puṇyuteju*] *'pacito śiritejagarbho pūrve nimitta supine imi addṛśāsi*; Hokazono 1994, 694.6−7 §14.40. The precise reading of this sentence differs among some manuscripts and hence different editions—cf. Lefmann 1902, I: 196.10—but the phrase *nimitta-supina* is universally agreed upon; see Hokazono 1994, 695 for his editorial notes; see also the Tibetan translation in D95, *mdo sde, kha*, 98b5). I also emend what reads as *puṇyu teju* in Hokazono's edition as a compound following Lefmann's readings; here, I tentatively understand *puṇyuteju* as a *dvandva* compound. As the language of the *Lalitavistara* is highly irregular, there are cases in which I cannot propose any satisfactory solutions; I will note such cases.

[30] Most Indian divinatory texts classify "omens" into three categories, namely, *nimitta* (both auspicious and inauspicious signs), *adbhuta* (bad omens), and *utpāta* (unusual natural disasters); see Kumagai 2005, 71. The exact meanings of these categories vary in different texts, and the three categories cannot definitively be distinguished from each other; see Tsuji 1968, 176–177. For a recent discussion of the classification of "omens" in Sanskrit literature, namely, *utpāta*, *adbhuta*, *śakuna*, and *nimitta*, see Baur 2023, 248−252. In summary, according to Baur (ibid., 252), "these terms demarcate different domains, such as unusual natural phenomena in connection with deities (*adbhuta*) or in connection with the three worlds (*utpāta*), the behaviour of animals (*śakuna*) and omens which fit none of these description (*nimitta*)."

[31] The text mostly uses the verb "to see" (Tib. *mthong ba*), and less frequently "to perceive" (Tib. *kun tu shes pa*). I cannot discern any distinction between the usages of these two verbs.

dream theories have more complicated views on the passive reception of dreams.[32] However, in our case, dreamers (bodhisattvas) indeed appear to see their dreams passively, since there is no evidence that bodhisattvas actively provoke any specific dream contents.

Another thing to note about the nature of dreams in the *SvN* is that information is not revealed *in* dreams, but *through* dreams. A telling example of this is Dream 106: here, a bodhisattva may dream of receiving a prophecy, but that dream does not mean the bodhisattva has received a prophecy or will do so. Instead, a bodhisattva who dreams of the sandals of the Tathāgata should be regarded as having received a prophecy. If we adopt the influential typology of dreams developed by Oppenheim for describing dreams in the ancient Near East—a typology of message dreams and symbolic dreams (Noegel 2001, 45)[33]—we can refer to the dreams in this *SvN* as symbolic dreams, dreams that convey information in a symbolized rather than a direct way. The semiotic importance of dreams for evaluating a bodhisattva's developmental stage is akin to what Greene has called the "semiotic ideology of meditative attainment": [34] a widespread belief in visionary experiences' legitimacy for evaluating spiritual attainment in a broad Buddhist context.

So far, we have outlined the dreams in the *SvN* from a theoretical perspective and answered the question of how the text views dreams. Next, I will look at the contents of these dreams. Among the 108 dreams, around one-third are directly associated with the Tathāgata; one-fifth are related to other Buddhist topics; and the rest are general dreams without any obvious relationship to Buddhism. The first group of dreams is mostly found at the beginning of the list; the other Buddhist dreams are scattered throughout the text (none of the general dreams is placed at the beginning of the list). Sometimes, we can clearly see that the dreams are grouped according to theme (e.g.,

[32] Stuhrmann (2009, 22) has argued that the earliest Vedic texts have a "subjective" view of dreams: dreamers are responsible for their actions in dreams just as they are responsible for them when awake. Though there later developed a view that dreamers are passive objects influenced by an exogenous force ("passives Objekt von außen kommender Mächte;" ibid., 26), this view does not apply to all kinds of dreams. For example, the *Caraka-saṃhitā*—a medical treatise—claims dreams that are imagined (Skt. *kalpita*) or created (Skt. *bhāvika*) are dreams of no diagnostic value (ibid., 31–32, n. 51). As suggested by the meaning of the Sanskrit words, such dreams are recognized as actively created by dreamers, and the dreamers in this scenario cannot be described as passive recipients of dreams. Therefore, Young's argument does not hold true for all the dreams described in Indian literature. I will elaborate on the passive reception of dreams in Chapters 3 and 4.

[33] Accordingly, "message dreams" are dreams "in which a god or important figure appears in a dream and delivers an auditory missive to the dreamer" whereas "symbolic dreams" are dreams "in which the dreamer witnesses enigmatic visual images that require an interpreter upon awakening" (Noegel 2001, 45).

[34] Though Greene's survey concentrates on meditation in medieval China, the term also applies to meditative attainment within the broader scope of Buddhism: "Both [the *Visuddhimagga* and the *Meditation Scripture*] assert that the attainment of *dhyāna* (or its immediate precursor, access concentration) will be communicated not only by the arising of the specific attributes that characterize said attainment as a novel state of body and mind, attributes such as bliss, happiness, and mental concentration but also by an encounter with a new and distinctive object of consciousness characterized in visual terms—in less rarified language, a vision" (Greene 2021b, 70).

Dreams 35 to 37 are about possessions of the Tathāgata), even though we cannot explain the full order.

The 108 dreams are a mine of information. What do the contents of these dreams tell us about the reality of the text and its audience? I will present a brief analysis of the practices, concerns, and beliefs reflected by these dreams.

First, as Mitsukawa (1982, 131–137) has already noted, many dreams entail seeing the Tathāgata and revering stūpas, two important devotional practices in the early Mahāyāna. Contrary to these expected practices, Mitsukawa noticed that there are also dreams about contradicting the Tathāgata's will. Indeed, while the very first dream in the list consists of seeing the Tathāgata talk, it is immediately followed by three dreams in which the Tathāgata does not respond to the dreamer. This arrangement, on the one hand, prioritizes those dreams in which the bodhisattvas interact directly with the Buddha; on the other hand, it highlights the anxiety of dreamers who find themselves obstructed from communicating with the Tathāgata. What Mitsukawa failed to pay special attention to, yet is equally important, are the numerous dreams about Dharma preachers (**dharma-bhāṇaka*).[35] They are featured everywhere in this text: bodhisattvas interact with them in their dreams, their past lives, and the future. We will return to the discussion of Dharma preachers later on.

Another important point to make about these Buddhist dreams is their revelatory character. Just as the very first dream tells us, bodhisattvas expect to hear from the Tathāgata in dreams; moreover, they hear various teachings of Dharma in their dreams (Dreams 57 to 59). Further, as Harrison (2003, 136–137) has pointed out, the dreamers in the *SvN* act both as "passive recipients" as well as active producers of teachings in their dreams. This shows that "among Mahāyāna practitioners, dreams are accepted as a natural medium for dharma transmission and dharma practice, and for explicitly religious visions" (ibid., 137). Further, working from the clues Harrison has provided, I would add that the text specifically emphasizes some of the dream objects as never-before-seen (or never-before-heard; e.g., Dreams 14, 22, 24, 44, 60, 78, 93) or as being from another world realm (Dreams 64, 65). These expressions reinforce Harrison's point that dreams take on a revelatory dimension in the *SvN*. In fact, the entire dream manual is evidence of the shared belief that dreams are a revelatory medium, i.e., they deliver knowledge of what is unknown—not only new teachings, but also a bodhisattva's own condition.

In addition to the Buddhist dreams discussed above, many of the dreams have no obvious association with Buddhism. The topics of these general dreams range from

[35] Although the term "*bhāṇaka*" may denote more a sense of "reciter" in the context of, for example, Nikāya literature (Allon 2021, 43−45), in our text and comparable Mahāyāna sūtras, as the role of *dharmabhāṇaka*s seems to go beyond recitation, I tentaively translate the word as "preacher." For a sketch of the change in the connotation of this term in Indian Buddhism, see Nance 2012, 46−49.

natural objects to social activities and mythical creatures: bodhisattvas dream of earthquakes, nāgas, harvest, and even being naked. The dreams are diverse and seem fairly universal; no obvious geographical or sociohistorical implications can be drawn from the text.

As there are as many as 108 dreams, it would surely be interesting if we could find any overlap between these dreams and those featured in other Buddhist dream interpretations. Indeed, we do find some similar dreams; however, no substantial parallel can be drawn between the *SvN* and such works. Dreams concerning common themes like eclipses, Sumeru, and nāgas are also present in the Buddha's life stories and other narratives;[36] except for the contents of one or two dreams, however, neither the order of dreams nor the interpretation of those dreams is comparable. As for the "Buddhist" dreams, the most frequent Buddhist dreams in Mahāyāna scriptures are message dreams, in which the Buddha communicates directly with bodhisattvas without the additional symbolic meanings of the dreams in the *SvN*.[37] Even if we extend our range of investigation to broader Indian texts on dreams, we see no obvious connection between the dreams of the *SvN* and those of other dream manuals. Some dreams may represent a common theme in Indian dream culture, such the last item in the list of 108 dreams: the dream of "obtaining a full vessel" coincides with one of the five conception dreams in Jainism (Sharma and Siegel 1980, 8, 25).[38] But this overlap is only partial. Even if fuller parallels once existed, they might already have been lost now or they are to be found in yet-unstudied sources.

It is also worth noting that some dreams appear to be a bit strange: some of them are not very concrete;[39] others overlap with other dream items. Moreover, the puzzling readings can hardly be resolved through philological strategies (i.e., replacing them with variant readings from other witnesses). These dreams again highlight the obscurity of the text, and I will come back to them when hypothesizing about the *SvN*'s textual history in Chapter 2.

[36] For example, in the *Lalitavistara*, before the Buddha's departure, the Buddha sees Sumeru Mountain in his dream (Hokazono 1994, 694.9−12 §14.41); in the *Mūlasarvāstivāda-vinaya*, Gopī sees the eclipses of the sun and moon in her dreams (Gnoli 1977, 83). The former dream will be discussed extensively in Chapter 4, while the latter dream will be revisited in Chapter 2.

[37] On this matter, Honbu 1979 provides quite a complete list of sūtras involving "seeing Buddhas in dreams."

[38] We can also spot some overlap between the dreams accounted in the *SvN* and those in one Jain scripture—the Digambara *Ṣaṭkhaṇḍāgama*; this Jain Āgama lists "eight types of auspicious (*kuśala*) supernatural powers of prognostication" with the assistance of eight types of great signs (*aṣṭāṅga-mahānimitta*) (Wiley 2012, 169), which include "seeing auspicious dreams, such as a dream in which the sun or moon enters one's own lotus-face, or seeing inauspicious dreams, such as going to a foreign country, riding on a donkey or camel, or the rubbing of ghee and oil, that appeared while a person was sleeping without disturbances from the three humours; and predicting happiness or sorrow in the past, present or future based on these dreams. It is of two types" (ibid., 170). For the correspondent Prakrit passages, see the volume 9 of Hiralal Jain's edition of this text (Jain 1949, 73.6−74.4).

[39] For example, Dream 43 is about "going to an intermediate direction." The Chinese also supports this reading. Compared to the other dream items, for example, the one above it ("dreaming of himself being naked") and the one following ("dreaming of having gone to a never-before-seen pleace"), this dream is less concrete.

Finally, 91 out of the 108 dreams contain a sublist of dreams. The sublists mostly include further variations on the main themes (as we have seen in Part B of Dream 89). What is interesting about their contents is that the sublist items link each dream variation with a *bhūmi* in ascending order of enlightenment. For example, regarding dreams of trees, dreaming of a bodhi tree means the dreamer is in the seventh *bhūmi*, while dreaming of a tree with unscented flowers signifies the first *bhūmi* (Dream 77). We can then assume that a bodhi tree is better than a flowering tree without a sweet fragrance. In other words, the order of each item in a given sublist can be seen as indicating the degree of the items' desirability. Many interesting doctrinal implications can then be drawn from these sublists. For example, in Dream 65, a renouncer is "higher" than a *dhāraṇī* possessor. Again, some sublists pose great challenges to our understanding: in some cases, the sublists are irrelevant to or contradict the main dream. We will revisit this inconsistency in Chapter 2.

To sum up, the 108 dreams in this text are diagnostic signs that bodhisattvas perceive spontaneously during their sleep. The dreams' contents vary greatly, but many of the themes reflect the practice, concerns, and beliefs of the manual's target audience. There exist no close parallels to this dream manual.

Diagnosis: *Bhūmi*, Obstructions, and Favorable Circumstances

The conditions that the dreams are used to diagnose are manifold, but they all point to the dreamer's personal state. Though the information each dream discloses seems without a fixed pattern, some details are clearly deemed more important, and certain details tend to be grouped together.

Bodhisattva *Bhūmi*s

First, each dream item mentions the *bhūmi*s of the dreamer. The only two elements included in each explanation are the dream's theme and the range of *bhūmi*s it signifies. In this text, the *bhūmi*s are designated solely by number, from one to ten; no names are assigned to the *bhūmi*s. The only exception is Dream 3, where, instead of a number, it vaguely says that dreaming of the Tathāgata covered (in clothes) from head to toe indicates the dreamer is a beginner (**ādikarmika*). *Ādikarmika* is also used as a name for the developmental stages of bodhisattvas; cf. the second of ten *bhūmi*s in the *SB*, or

the second of the loosely-defined four developmental stages in the *SP*.[40] However, we cannot draw any conclusions about the *SvN*'s doctrinal affiliation based merely on this term. The majority of dreams are associated with a range of *bhūmi*s, usually spanning from the first *bhūmi* to a higher one; however, there are also cases where the dreams only signify one *bhūmi*. Except for its number, there are no attributes ascribed to these *bhūmi*s. We can only gain knowledge about them by consulting the information provided for each *bhūmi*.

The information that follows the *bhūmi* number is usually a brief description of the dreamer's state. The conditions may be favorable, unfavorable, or mixed; they could be about the dreamer's past, his current state, or future events. Note that here the dreamer's future state, i.e. before treatment, must be distinguished from his prognosis after treatment: the observed current or future conditions of the bodhisattvas reflect their true state before any intervention.

I propose to examine the bodhisattvas' conditions primarily in terms of whether they are negative or positive. As already suggested by how the text closes with bodhisattvas purifying their demonic and karmic obstructions, the core concern of the text is obstructions, and most of the conditions disclosed by the dreams are negative. Yet rather than strictly discouraging the bodhisattvas, there are also cases in which the latent information about them is reassuring. Under the categories of "obstructions" and "favorable circumstances," I will focus my discussion on some recurring themes: among the obstructions, karmic obstructions and the deeds of Māra are most frequently encountered; among the favorable circumstances, receiving a prediction and being held in favor by Buddhas, bodhisattvas, and gods seem most important.

Obstructions

a. Karmic Obstructions

As suggested by the formulaic phrase "That karmic obstruction of his will be cleared away, and he will certainly progress toward enlightenment," which appears in more than two-thirds of the dream entries, we know that resolving "karmic obstruction" is a necessary condition of "proceeding toward enlightenment" and the core concern of the text. Indeed, in more than half of the dreams, the dreamers have not yet achieved

[40] *Ādikarmika* is the "second stage" of the alleged four-stage scheme of bodhisattvas that is found in the *SP* and several other early Mahāyāna sūtras (note it should not be understood as a fixed stage; see Hirakawa 1989a, 409–410; see also my previous note in Introduction, n. 46), or the second of the ten *zhu*s (Chn. 住) in the *SB* (Nattier 2007, 126–127). For a detailed discussion on this term, see Hirakawa 1989a, 407–412.

enlightenment primarily because of unwholesome karma, i.e., karmic obstructions they have inherited from their previous offenses.

"Karmic obstructions" (**karmāvaraṇa*) is a word that appears frequently in Mahāyāna scriptures.[41] Just as in the *SvN*, most texts use this word without providing a definition, perhaps because the concept is so familiar within the Mahāyāna context. The *DZDL* explains *karmāvaraṇa* simply as "all bad deeds" (**pāpa-karman*), and states that it is the foremost among the three types of obstacles: namely: 1) obstacles composed of defilement (**kleśāvaraṇa*); 2) obstacles composed of action (**karmāvaraṇa*); and 3) obstacles composed of retribution (**vipākāvaraṇa*), since karma is long-lasting and retribution is impossible to escape (T. 1509, 100a9–14; Lamotte 1944–1980, I: 346–349).

Fortunately, the *SvN* itself reveals many facts about such "karmic obstructions." The karmic obstructions are described in both a quantitative as well as a qualitative way: their number may be small, moderate, or large; more importantly, the text gives more than twenty descriptions of actual karmic obstructions. For example, "keeping people from seeing virtuous spiritual friends and hearing the Dharma" (Dream 3), "showing disrespect to the practice of Dharma preachers" (Dream 5), and even "taking pleasure in the true Dharma's vanishing" (Dream 11). All the concrete examples directly involve the Dharma and Dharma preachers.[42]

This is rather unexpected, as the more commonly accepted definition of *karmāvaraṇa*—for example, that found in the Sarvāstivāda Abhidharmas and quoted by Mochizuki (1958–1963, 1057) in his comprehensive dictionary—is the "five sins of immediate retribution (*ānantarya*)" (e.g., in the *Apidamo fazhi lun* 阿毘達磨發智論, T. 1544, 973a27–28), namely: 1) killing one's father; 2) killing one's mother; 3) killing an arhat; 4) spilling Buddha's blood intentionally; and 5) causing a schism.[43] These are drastically different from the karmic obstructions listed in the *SvN*. Moreover, even if

[41] This concept is deemed important in pan-Buddhist traditions, but the nuance of this term is quite different depending on the period and region. For example, in the Pāli context, "karmic obstructions" are emphasized as obstacles to progressing in meditation training (Buswell and Lopez 2013, 423–424). A similar implication is also found in Chinese meditative literature, where they also pose major obstacles to meditative progress, along with "obstructions of defilements or afflictions." More specifically, the sixth-century meditation master Zhiyi 智顗 indicated that "karmic obstructions are not the results of bad karma fully arisen in the objective circumstances of one's life, such as illness, misfortune, or a bad rebirth. They are rather something like premonitions of yet-to-arrive karmic fruits, which a successful calming of the mind has the power to reveal" (Greene 2021b, 121–122). A comprehensive summary of this ever-changing concept in a broad Indian Buddhism context can be found in Kamimura 1963.

[42] The emphasis on karmic obstruction as directly related to disrespecting the Dharma and Dharma preachers may reflect the logic of "'conformable multiplied recompense' wherein the karmic fruit of an action resembles the action itself (a sort of *lex talionis*), but in much increased intensity" (Silk 2007, 275), as is frequently seen in Buddhist literature. In this sense, disrespect to the Dharma and Dharma preachers naturally obstructs one's understanding of the Dharma. As we will see in the section on the antidotes to karmic obstructions, the *SvN* goes further by following the logic that the proper antidotes are said to resemble the unwholesome action (sharing the same subject as the actions), but in the opposite direction. That means that the karmic obstruction stemming from disrespect to the Dharma will cause the bodhisattva in question to have trouble grasping the Dharma, which should be cured by paying extreme respect to the Dharma.

[43] For more details, see Silk 2007, 254–255 and Kamimura 1963, 21.

we restrict our survey to Mahāyāna scriptures, as Hirakawa has pointed out (1989b, 84–85), the sins that are unforgivable and cause disastrous consequences generally include the "five sins of immediate retribution," hostility toward the Dharma, and occasionally the *pārājika*s.[44] However, the *SvN* does not concern itself with the *ānantarya*s or the *pārājika*s at all. The sins of Mahāyāna texts differ from the karmic obstructions of the *SvN* either in terms of the actual offenses, or whether their consequences are considered from the perspective of karmic retribution.[45]

The gap between the karmic obstructions of the *SvN* and texts such as the Sarvāstivāda Abhidharmas perhaps implies that the intended audience of the *SvN* had a greater fear of offenses caused by acts against the Dharma than by any of the other offenses. It is true that "for most Indian Buddhist authors, the most serious offense is to fail to believe in the Buddhist teachings, to reject the Dharma" (Silk 2007, 273). The *Pañca* also states that deeds that lead to the ruin of the Dharma (Skt. *Dharma-vyasana-samvartanīya*) are more gravely unforgivable than the five sins of immediate retribution.[46] While these texts are generally meant to warn bodhisattvas against hostility against the Dharma, by casting the offenses as obstructions rather than the complete destruction of a bodhisattva's hope for enlightenment,[47] they share the same spirit as the *SvN* in this respect. The *SvN* can further be seen as dealing with (the fear of suffering) the consequences of such offenses.

A related question concerns the typology of obstructions to progress toward enlightenment; as noted above, the *DZDL* claims that there are three such obstructions,

[44] The four *pārājika* offenses for monks are "having sexual relations, stealing, killing a human being, and falsely claiming spiritual attainment" (Greene 2017, 369).

[45] If we are determined to find any list of items that are comparable to the karmic obstructions of the *SvN*, the closest may be the deeds of Māra or offenses due to arrogance in several Mahāyāna texts. The deeds of Māra and offenses of arrogance are commonly associated with offenses against the Dharma preachers or the spreading of the Dharma in general. For example, the ten deeds of Māra in the *LB*, quoted in the *Śikṣ* (Bendall 1902, 151.13–152.19; for English renditions, see Bendall and Rouse 1922,150–152 as well as Goodman 2016, 147–148); for the ten offenses caused by arrogance in the same sūtra, see T. 278, 663c29–664b4. These list items are also comparable to the offenses that obstruct bodhisattvas from obtaining the thought of enlightenment in the *Kāśyapaparivarta*; see Staël-Holstein 1926, 2–3, 6–7 §§1, 3. However, in these texts, the settings of the wrongdoings are all at the present time, and they are never associated with obstructions from past karma.

[46] "Now, indeed, Venerable Śāriputra asked the Blessed One like this: 'O, Blessed One, are the five sins of immediate retribution not even comparable to [the sins of the one who] has accumulated the karma that leads to the ruin of the Dharma?' The Blessed One said: 'Śāriputra, [when comparing the sins of the one who] has accumulated the karma that leads to the ruin of the Dharma [to the five sins of immediate retribution], you should not say that 'it is comparable.'" Skt. *atha khalv āyuṣmān Śāriputro Bhagavantam etad avocat: pañca Bhagavann ānantaryāṇy asya dharmavyasanasaṃvartanīyasya karmaṇaḥ kṛtasyopacitasya prativarṇikā api na bhavanti? Bhagavān āha: prativarṇiketi Śāriputra na vaktavyā 'sya dharmavyasanasaṃvartaniyā-karmaṇaḥ kṛtasyopacitasya*, Kimura 1986–2009, II–III: 151.29–33; for Conze's English translation, see Conze 1975, 289. The text goes on to explain the deeds that contribute to the ruin of the Dharma. They are basically deeds against the Perfection of Wisdom (Kimura 1986–2009, II–III: 151.33–152.6), and the consequence is said to be great suffering (ibid., 152.6–23). The *Aṣṭa* expresses a similar idea in the chapter on the deeds of Māra (Wogihara 1932−1935, 778.5−9; see also Conze 1973, 233).

[47] Views on the consequence of the offense of showing hostility against the Dharma vary in different scriptures (Silk 2007, 272–273). In many texts, such hostility is discussed in the context of causes of being an *icchantika*, i.e., "one devoid of roots of goodness is not permanently damned" (ibid., 271). Since the *icchantika* does not appear to be a known concept in the *SvN*, there is no need to extend our discussion of this term. However, it is relevant to our discussion here to note that some texts, for example, the *Ratnagotravibhāga,* see such offenses as redeemable with the proper practices (ibid., 272), and therefore agree with the *Pañca* and the *SvN*.

of which the karmic obstruction is the most worrying. Several slightly divergent lists of obstructions are found among the vast body of Mahāyāna scriptures. For example, according to a chapter of the *LB*, there are four obstructions, including 1) karmic obstructions; 2) obstructions composed of defilement; 3) obstructions to the Dharma; and 4) obstructions composed of retribution.[48] The *Bodhisattvapiṭaka* of the MRK collection lists six such obstructions; besides the four listed above, there are two additional ones: the obstruction of (wrong) views (見障; Skt. **darśanāvaraṇa*) and cognitive obstruction (智障; Skt. **jñeyāvaraṇa*).[49]

The *SvN* mentions two further obstructions besides karmic ones—"obstructions to the Dharma" (**dharmāvaraṇa*) and "obstructions composed of defilement" (**kleśāvaraṇa*)—but only a few times each. Given that obstructions composed of defilement are mostly listed together with karmic obstructions,[50] it appears that the text recognizes a twofold classification of obstructions, but that karmic obstructions are seen as far more important. On the other hand, obstruction to the Dharma—besides the fact that it appears only three times, one of which could be a corruption[51]—never appears alongside karmic obstruction, and it is hard to tell whether it is considered a class of obstruction at all.

What is more frequently found together with karmic obstruction, and is obviously another core concern of the target audience, are the deeds of Māra (**māra-karman*), or interference from Māra.

b. The Deeds of Māra

As mentioned above, the typology of obstructions to a bodhisattva's progress varies greatly between different treatises. By frequently singling out karmic obstructions and interference from Māra, the *SvN* sees these two as the most worrisome of all the obstructions.[52] Compared to other lists, such as those of three or four obstructions

[48] "Because he produces no unwholesome karma, there is no karmic obstruction; because he does not give rise to defilement, there is no obstruction consisting of defilement; because he does not disdain the Dharma, there is no obstruction to the Dharma; because he does not slander the true Dharma, there is no obstruction consisting of retribution." 不作惡業故，無惡業障；不起煩惱故，無煩惱障；不輕慢法故，無有法障；不誹謗正法故，無有報障, *Da fangguang fo huayan jing* 大方廣佛華嚴經, T. 279 (21), 105a7–9l.

[49] See the *Pusazang hui* 菩薩藏會, T. 310 (12), 299b9–11. Besides the more influential ones, I also want to quote the five obstructions found in the *Dasheng sanju chanhui jing* 大乘三聚懺悔經 T. 1493, since this belongs to a textual tradition that is closely related to the *Triskandhaka* (which will be elaborated on below): karmic obstruction (業障), obstructions of affliction (煩惱障), obstructions to (benefitting) beings (眾生障), obstruction to the Dharma (法障), obstructions to (a favorable destination of) *saṃsara* (轉後世障) (T. 1493, 1091b28–c5).

[50] In fact, in most places, the text only refers to them as "defilement" (Tib. *nyon mongs*) instead of "obstructions consisting of defilement" (Tib. *nyon mongs pa'i sgrib*); since "afflictions" is usually paired with other obstructions, I think two terms are used interchangeably in the *SvN*. See the parallelism of phrasing in Dreams 58 and 63.

[51] The term *dharmāvaraṇa* is used in Dreams 2, 23, and 78. The occurrence of it in Dream 78 may well be a corruption of "karmic obstruction," as we can suppose based on the Chinese translation and its context; see Appendix III §78.

[52] The question of how closely entangled are the deeds of Māra with karmic obstruction is not easy to answer; some may identify these deeds as the cause or a subcategory of karmic obstruction. For example, Campany (2020, 89) has described Māra's activity in the *SvN* as that of "demons who throw karmic obstacles in the practitioner's path," but

discussed above, this seems quite distinctive. However, although Māra's deeds are not officially obstructions, the *SvN* is not the only scripture that recognizes these and karmic obstructions as the foremost obstacles to enlightenment. The *LP* begins with a description of *mahāsattva*s as "having passed beyond the deeds of Māra and having been liberated from karmic obstructions".[53] In explaining this phrase, the *DZDL* outlines the deeds of Māra: Māra is interpreted both in a personified sense, as the demon king Māra, as well as in an abstract sense, as a blanket term for the four kinds of *māra*s. The range of Māra's activity is so broad that it can hardly be summarized in short: to put it simply, Māra destroys all good deeds, and his activities are closely associated with hindrances like desire, hatred, and stupidity (T. 1509, 99b11–100a09; Lamotte 1944–1980, I: 339–346).

Rooted in the Buddha's life story, interference from Māra is a prominent concern in the Buddhist tradition. Several modern studies have devoted themselves solely to the broad concept of the "works of Māra."[54] When it comes to their role as obstructions to a bodhisattva's path to enlightenment in Mahāyāna scriptures, perhaps one of the most famous descriptions, as quoted in the *Śikṣāsamuccaya* (*Śikṣ*, hereafter), is that of the ten deeds of Māra in the *Lokottara-parivarta* of the *LB* collection (Bendall 1902, 151.13–152.19; for English, see Goodman 2016, 147–148). These ten deeds are all associated with the practices of bodhisattvas and can generally be summarized as pride and lack of respect toward the Dharma, Dharma preachers, and the Buddha. The *Śikṣ* also quotes several other characterizations of his deeds, such as "any disagreement between the teacher and the students is Māra's doing" and "[w]henever someone indulges in unwholesome qualities and abandons wholesome qualities, all that is Māra's doing" (Goodman 2006, 52–55; for Sanskrit, see Bendall 1902, 49.5–51.20).

As can be seen above, the phrase "Māra's deeds" in the Mahāyāna context is used to refer to many different obstructions a bodhisattva may encounter,[55] yet there hardly seems to be an overarching definition, only countless lists of concrete activities. It is probably true, as Mäll (2005, 95) has suggested, that "*māra-karma* is not a term belonging to the level of śāstras, i.e., it did not undergo theoretical development in the

does not give any further explanation. In my understanding, the juxtaposition of Māra's deeds with karmic obstruction in this text makes them primarily two separate categories; as we will see, the ways they pose obstructions to bodhisattvas are indeed different.

[53] Skt. *mārakarmasamatikrāntaiḥ karmāvaraṇapratiprasrabdhair*. Kimura 1986–2009, I-1: 1.19–20.

[54] Most recently, Nichols 2019 has provided a comprehensive overview of Māra's role throughout Buddhist traditions. Ling 1997 places great emphasis on Māra in the Theravāda tradition; for Māra's activities in Pāli tradition, see Ling 1997, 96–163. Boyd (1975, 77–99) also elaborates on *māra-karman* in his chapter "Deeds of Māra," though his emphasis is also on early Buddhism. Clark's (1994, 133–175) dissertation illustrates the various concerns of Mahāyāna practitioners regarding the "psychological significance" (ibid., 134) of Māra by using materials from six major Mahāyāna works, namely, the *Prajñāpāramitā*s, the *Lotus Sūtra*, the *Saṃdhinirmocana-sūtra*, the *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa*, the *Bodhicāryāvatāta*, and the *Jātakamālā*. Further exploration on Māra in Mahāyāna scriptures will follow in Chapters 5 and 6.

[55] As put by Clark (1994, 135), "It is Māra in his various forms which constitutes all those factors which obstruct the Buddhist practitioner and which must be broken, defeated, put to flight, etc., in order for the goal of Buddhahood to be won."

period when Buddhist philosophical schools emerged"; thus our search for a theoretical definition of this term may merely be in vain.

Out of more than ninety mentions of Māra in the *SvN*, we find only a few with detailed descriptions of his activities.[56] The foremost deed of Māra in this text seems to be that of deceiving bodhisattvas. In several dreams, if a bodhisattva sees signs that imply another *bhūmi* than the bodhisattva has truly achieved, he should recognize this as a deed of Māra (Dreams 5, 14, 80, 86). Other activities that imply the interference of Māra are a bodhisattva's arrogance (Dream 32) and inclination toward a reversal in his progress (Dream 51). Moreover, the text sees Māra's deeds and karmic obstructions as independent, as there is no overlap between the two. For example, according to Dreams 83 and 85, the bodhisattvas in question have already cleared away their karmic obstructions, yet are still subject to Māra's deeds.

Though limited to a few cases, the text does state that bodhisattvas higher than the sixth *bhūmi* (Dream 102) or the seventh (Dream 16) are free from the influence of Māra; however, this is not a consistent rule. We find numerous dreams in which bodhisattvas higher than the sixth *bhūmi* are still susceptible to Māra's acts (Dreams 19, 106, 108).

Other Obstructions

A bodhisattva's own faults (Tib. *rang gi nyes pa*, Skt. **sva-doṣa*) are another factor that may prevent him from progressing. In contrast to the two obstructive factors above, in Dream 84, though the bodhisattva "has neither demonic deeds nor karmic obstruction, he still has not arrived at perfection due to his own faults." The text subsequently hints at "[a tendency toward] quarrel and dispute" being his own fault. A further case interesting enough to be mentioned in brief is Dream 86, in which the bodhisattva is accused of being rich; this seems to be the main obstacle to his progressing further.

In addition, as noted above, obstructions composed of defilement (*kleśāvaraṇa*) appear several times in this text. The meaning of *kleśāvaraṇa* is taken as self-evident in this text; no detailed examples are given. It is not clear whether *kleśāvaraṇa* and a bodhisattva's faults overlap in this text.

Future Obstructions

In several cases, dreams also inform bodhisattvas of the sad news that they will have a bleak future. For example, the bodhisattva in Dream 43 is doomed to have little intelligence but great laziness. We should see the prognostic and diagnostic meanings of dreams in this text as two sides of the same coin: the text implies that unfavorable future events are the result of past karmic obstructions (e.g., Dreams 69, 80). Therefore, although such obstructions take place in the future, their cause belongs to the past.

[56] Since there is no trace of the four *māra*s in the *SvN*, there is no point in using the plural form of Māra.

Favorable Circumstances

So far, we have discussed only the bad news that dreams may convey, but bodhisattvas should not be afraid to sleep; rather, they can also receive good news through their dreams.

a. Receiving a Prophecy

Receiving a prophecy is the most promising event that a bodhisattva can ever "dream of."

The word "prophecy" (*vyākaraṇa*) is certainly familiar to the intended audience of the text, and a definition seems unnecessary. While it is true that *vyākaraṇa* typically means a prediction by which a buddha indicates a bodhisattva as a buddha-to-be, there are different classes of prophecy.[57] In what sense, among all possible definitions, is the word "prophecy" used here?

The text specifies the content, the giver and, on occasion, even the time of the prophecy. Concerning the content of the prophecies, the bodhisattvas are forecasted to "attain enlightenment" (Dream 13), to be "irreversible" (Dream 96), or to "become a buddha" (Dream 55). In one place, the text specifies that the prophecy was made by past buddhas (Dream 13). Some dreams particularly emphasize certain details of the prophecy, for example, a specific time that is "in the next life" (Dream 12). The indication then appears to be that a perfect prophecy is a detailed prophecy of buddhahood made by past buddhas.[58] The problem is that we do not know whether we should assume that prophecies with no such specifications also imply the above details. Since the contents of prophecy vary from "[becoming] an irreversible bodhisattva" to "attaining enlightenment," perhaps there are superior prophecies and lesser ones.

[57] Regarding *vyākaraṇa* in the sense of "prophecy," despite the frequency of its appearance in Buddhist literature, there are few systematic studies on it. Taga 1974 has perhaps provided the most comprehensive study on the development of *vyākaraṇa* to date; his study extends from Pāli scriptures to early Mahāyāna texts. Binz's (1980) dissertation has also traced the development of *vyākaraṇa*'s significance to a bodhisattva's career in relation to *praṇidhāna*. Prophecies that are designated as *vyākaraṇa* are amply found in the Buddha's life stories and Avadānas (Matsumura 2012; Binz 1980, 105–118), but it is in Mahāyāna scriptures that prophecies of buddhahood become an identifying characteristic (Ishikawa 1959, 51). The most known model of *vyākaraṇa* is roughly as follows (for example, as in the Dīpaṃkara prophecy; see Matsumura 2012, 85–87): a buddha (giver) predicts a bodhisattva (recipient) to achieve buddhahood (the content of the prophecies), but Mahāyāna scriptures do not always stick to this formula; they sometimes present their versions of *vyākaraṇa* with slightly different details. For an outline of the different classes of prophecy in Mahāyāna scriptures, see Mochizuki 1958–1963, 2434–2437. For example, one widely circulated classification of predictions is the four types of predictions mentioned in the *Śūraṃgamasamādhi-sūtra* (Lamotte 1998, 182; I will discuss this classification extensively in Chapter 5) while most such lists are found in the commentaries, perhaps to explain the varied prophecies present in the sūtras. *Vyākaraṇa*s may differ in terms of their time of fulfillment, how the Buddha announces them, the causes of the prophecies, etc. For the purpose of this dissertation, the most important things to note about *vyākaraṇa* are its necessity to a successful bodhisattva career (Drewes 2021, 172) and its close association with the other two important milestones on the bodhisattva path, namely, irreversibility (*avinivartanīya*) and receptivity to the nonproduction of dharmas (*anutpattikadharma-kṣānti*) in the early Mahāyāna context (Harrison 1993, 171). Both points will be reiterated many times in this dissertation.

[58] The premise here is that the text forms a unified whole —an idea that we will challenge in Chapter 2.

Finally, the *bhūmi* at which a bodhisattva received a prophecy is not fixed throughout the text. Though it is frequently linked with the eighth *bhūmi*, the moment is never definite. This is a substantial problem that we will return to in the next chapter.

b. Being Held in Favor

Another way in which the dreams may bring hope is by informing the dreamers that they are "held in favor" (Tib. *dgongs pa*, *sems pa*; Chn. 念; Skt. **samanvāharati*)[59] by gods, Buddhas, or bodhisattvas. This phrase appears more than ten times and can be applied to either the current or future state of bodhisattvas. The phrase "the bodhisattva is held in favor by buddhas" is widely used in Mahāyāna scriptures, and it is rarely considered a technical formula (i.e., a term with underlying details). According to Edgerton (1953, II: 564–565), *samanvāharati* means "to pay heed to" and, in other contexts, may have more nuanced meanings; none of the examples he offers seem to imply anything technical. Similarly, the definitions that Nakamura (1975, I: 385) and Mochizuki (1958–1963, 1270) provide for the Chinese equivalent, 護念, also imply that the term should be taken literally, i.e., "to protect and keep in mind." While this is perhaps true for most of its appearances in the sūtras, the fact that the phrase "being held in favor by buddhas" appears so frequently in the *SvN* to denote a major advantage concerning a bodhisattva's progress leads me to suspect that the phrase should be understood to bear some unspoken meanings. While the *SvN* itself offers no explanation, its similar usage in the *Aṣṭa* is quite telling:

> Subhūti, all the realized, worthy, and perfect enlightened buddhas who live, dwell, reside in these immeasurable and numberless world systems—when the blessed buddhas perceive bodhisattvas *mahāsattva*s who thus are practicing the Perfection of Wisdom (*prajñāpāramitā*) with their buddha eyes, Subhūti—will support the bodhisattvas *mahāsattva*s who practice the Perfection of Wisdom, and **hold them in favor (*samanvāharanti*)**. Moreover, Subhūti, the bodhisattvas *mahāsattva*s who practice the Perfection of Wisdom and are supported and **held in favor** by realized, worthy, and perfect enlightened buddhas should be taken as being irreversible (*avinivartanīya*) from unsurpassable, perfect enlightenment, and for them, there will never be an obstacle from Māra or anything else. They will never be obstructed by Māra.[60]

[59] The Sanskrit term behind the Tib. *dgongs pa* and Chn. 念 is most possibly *samanvāharati*, c.f., in the *Aṣṭa*, in Sanskrit, Wogihara 1932−1935, II: 851.1−7, in Tibetan, D12, *brgyad stong, ka*, 242a2−6, and in Chinese, T. 220 (VII), 852b13−24, see Karashima 2011, 428.

[60] Skt. *ye 'pi te Subhūte 'prameyeṣv asaṃkhyeyeṣu lokadhātuṣu tathāgatā arhantaḥ samyaksaṃbuddhā etarhi tiṣṭhanti dhriyante yāpayanti te 'pi buddhā bhagavantaḥ prajñāpāramitāyām evaṃ carantaṃ bodhisattvaṃ mahāsattvaṃ buddhacakṣuṣā paśyanti / te ca Subhūte bodhisattvaṃ mahāsattvāṃ prajñāpāramitāyāṃ carantam anugṛhṇanti **samanvāharanti** // ye ca khalu punaḥ Subhūte bodhisattvā mahāsattvāḥ prajñāpāramitāyāṃ carantas*

Accordingly, a bodhisattva who is held in favor by gods and buddhas will not turn back (from enlightenment) and will be safe from Māra. Though we have no reason to equate the phrase's implication in the *Prajñāpāramitā*s with that in the *SvN*, in both cases, the attention bodhisattvas receive from their role models offers them a great feeling of security against possible regression and Māra's interference.

c. Wholesome Karmas

Though the text is primarily concerned with obstructive, unwholesome karmas, it also acknowledges that there are lucky bodhisattvas who are gifted with wholesome karmas from the past. Only very few comments fall into this category. The source of the wholesome karmas is said to be reverence and service either to buddhas (Dreams 22, 25) or Dharma preachers (Dream 22).

The above is an outline of the contents of the text's "diagnostic" content. This descriptive approach to the diagnoses hides an important question: why do the abovementioned conditions need to be diagnosed by dreams? Based on the definition of "diagnosis," these conditions should be unidentified before the diagnosis, and are the reasons for a bodhisattva's satisfactory or unsatisfactory progress. It is easy to understand how these factors are the reasons for a bodhisattva's current condition and future development; the remaining question is thus, why are these conditions unknown to bodhisattvas? Is it because the bodhisattvas targeted by this text are not self-aware of their situation at all?

"Differential Diagnosis"

The answer to this is no: rather, the bodhisattvas in this text are indeed supposed to know their own situation—to some extent.

The optional conditions attached to several dreams hint that, first, bodhisattvas can self-report their fulfillment of specific criteria (e.g., being diligent or not); and secondly, the fulfillment of these criteria also contributes to a bodhisattva's developmental stage. For example, "if a bodhisattva sees the radiance of the Tathāgata in a dream, that

tathāgatair arhadbhiḥ samyaksaṃbuddhair anugṛhyante ***samanvāhriyante*** *te te* [*sic*] *Subhūte bodhisattvā mahāsattvā avinivarttanīyā anuttarāyāḥ samyaksaṃbodher dhārayitavyāḥ / na ca teṣām antarāyā utpatsyante Mārato vā 'nyato vā //*, Wogihara 1932−1935, II: 850.24−851.7. For the Tibetan, see D12, *brgyad stong, ka*, 242a2–6; For the Chinese, see Xuanzang's translation in T. 220 (VII) 852b13–24. Note that due to the textual development of the *Aṣṭa*, the wording in Xuanzang's translation appears quite different from the above Sanskrit and Tibetan version; the latter are closer to a Song translation of this text by Shihu 施護, i.e., *Fomu chusheng sanfazang banre boluomiduo jing* 佛母出生三法藏般若波羅蜜多經, T. 228, 662b20–26. For an English translation (in fact, a paraphrase) of this passage, see Conze 1973, 260. Identical passages can also be found in the *LP*.

bodhisattva should be regarded as [being] in the third *bhūmi*," but if "he has been diligent, he will not only attain possession of *dhāraṇī*s, but also be on (one of) the ten *bhūmi*s[61]" (Dream 17). On the other hand, if a bodhisattva is "not diligent, he should also realize [that he is a victim of] Māra's deeds" (Dream 48). In other words, if a bodhisattva is diligent, his overall diagnosis will yield a bonus—but if he is not, he must reckon with an extra disadvantage. By adding this optional condition, the text allows us to see which sub-conditions bodhisattvas are presumed to be aware of.[62]

There are around twenty cases in which such optional conditions are added. Among these cases, diligence appears to be the most important factor, followed by (pure) intention (**āśaya*). Moreover, bodhisattvas are supposed to know how long they have generated thoughts of enlightenment (**bodhicitta*) (Dream 11); whether they serve their virtuous spiritual friends (**kalyāṇamitra*) (Dream 14); whether they have acquired *dhāraṇī*s and higher knowledge (**abhijñā*); whether they have achieved a truthful resolve (**satyādhiṣṭhāna*)[63] (Dream 1); and finally, whether they have doubts (Dream 40). Bodhisattvas should be able to evaluate the above conditions on their own (they do not need dreams to reveal such facts), and all of them are decisive to their progress.[64]

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[61] Tib. *sa bcu po thams cad du yang 'gyur ro*. This expression is truly perplexing; in this text, it seems to mean "he has the capacity to reach all the ten *bhūmi*s;" see also Dreams 14, 95, 102, and 208.

[62] Dream 34—which reads "that bodhisattva should be regarded as being in one of the ten *bhūmi*s; his enlightenment depends on his diligence"—further confirms this observation.

[63] The *SvN* does not give detailed examples of what truthful resolves bodhisattvas make and how they make them. We can hardly know whether the resolve-making in this text should be treated as a "rite" of truth, for example, as suggested by Wayman (1984, 392–393). In the past century, there has been much discussion on *satyādhiṣṭhāna* and related words such as its Pāli equivalent, *saccakiriyā*. For the word's meaning in a broad Indian context, see Burlingame 1917, Brown 1968, and Lüders 1959 (for their references to the word's usage in the Buddhist context, especially in Jātakas, see Burlingame 1917, 432–434 and Lüders 1959, 487–496). For more recent summaries on this matter in Buddhist literature, see Holz 2015, 100–11, Davidson 2014, 49–51, and Stuart 2012, 165–177. Though the meaning and implication of *satyādhiṣṭhāna* do not always remain unchanged, as it is used in a vast range of works, its essential meaning should perhaps be explained as a statement of truth that commonly "entails the manipulation of reality" (Davidson 2014, 49) and such a "performative utterance […] affirms the authority of the principle in the statement" (ibid., 50). Therefore, the significance of *satyādhiṣṭhāna* is the confirmation of the authority of a certain statement. Thus, what statement should we assume the *satyādhiṣṭhāna* of the *SvN* to confirm based on its context? Regarding *satyādhiṣṭhāna* in Mahāyāna Buddhism, Brown (1968, 175) has argued that "the Ten Perfections often come to form the basis for the Truth Act, especially the first of them, which is generosity." In other words, success in performing the *satyādhiṣṭhāna* in this context confirms the performers' generosity. While this could be true, regarding the passage in the smaller and larger *Prajñāpāramitā*s that is most relevant to the *SvN*, i.e., the passage on dreams of *satyādhiṣṭhāna* affirming a bodhisattva's irreversibility, the authority is the truthfulness of the bodhisattva's irreversibility (Harrison 2013, 137–138; the passage will be examined in details in Chapter 4). In light of those studies, the implication of the *satyādhiṣṭhāna* mentioned in Dream 1 thus seems similar to that of the passage in the *Prajñāpāramitā*s, that is, confirmation of irreversibility of the bodhisattva in question: "if that bodhisattva is in possession of *dhāraṇīs*, or in possession of higher knowledge, or one who has achieved a truthful resolve (*satyādhiṣṭhāna*), he should be regarded as being prophesied to be in the eighth *bhūmi*" (Dream 1). The other occurrence of *satyādhiṣṭhāna* in this text appears very vague: "if he sees an earthquake (caused) by a truthful resolve, that bodhisattva should be regarded as being in the fourth *bhūmi*" (Dream 47). I cannot identify any parallel passage in which a *satyādhiṣṭhāna* causes any kind of earthquake. It is possible that this association between a *satyādhiṣṭhāna* and an earthquake is related to the Buddha's explanation of causes of earthquakes found primarily in the textual family of the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra*. The themes of the eight causes are summarized by Ciurtin (2009, 69) as "cosmology, meditation, and crucial events of the Buddha's life." These causes show that the power of meditation, or as the commentary ascribed to Buddhaghosa suggests, "the effulgence of knowledge" or "merit" (ibid., 71), can shake the earth. With this logic, a *satyādhiṣṭhāna* should also be able to cause an earthquake, as *satyādhiṣṭhāna* could be interpreted as a means to manipulate reality through the power of truth in relation to one's spiritual achievement such as meditation or knowledge. However, as the context of Dream 47 does not provide us further detail, the above analysis remains rather speculative.

[64] Therefore, it is in fact hard to draw a line between the activities included as advantageous conditions and the

As per the above analysis, we can see that the text separates the decisive factors of a bodhisattva's progress into known ones (that are realized and evaluated with self-awareness) and unknown ones (that are conveyed in dreams). After a summary of the treatments prescribed in the *SvN*, I will offer my further observations on the shared features of the phenomena to be diagnosed.

Treatment

No matter whether a bodhisattva's dream characterizes his current state as positive or negative, since the bodhisattvas addressed by this text, despite the promises that "they will certainly progress to enlightenment," have not yet achieved enlightenment, they are always prescribed instructions to help them progress in their enlightenment. Of all the dream entries, more than ninety include instructions for bodhisattvas. Given that the text is not consistent in the composition of its entries, this number is quite significant: providing antidotes to a bodhisattva's obstructions is almost as important as identifying his *bhūmi*.

The instructions always start with a "should," which makes them easy to identify. Some of the instructions closely correspond to the content of the dream or the karmic obstruction. For example, "since he once hindered those who were about to come forth and he created obstructions for those who were about to listen to the Dharma, he should devote himself to preparing a Dharma throne; he should also bring people to hear the Dharma" (Dream 4). Such instances clearly show that the instructions in this text are intended as antidotes to karmic obstructions, and there is a causality between the effect of a set of instructions and the elimination of an obstruction.

That said, however, we do not always find a palpable link between the instructions and a specific obstruction, partly because both are quite vague in many cases. We frequently encounter common, general activities prescribed to bodhisattvas, such as "understanding emptiness" (Dreams 42, 74, 83), "remaining benevolent" (Dream 51), and "cultivating skillfulness in means" (Dream 48). Slightly more specifically, bodhisattvas are sometimes told to cultivate the six Perfections "with pure intention" (Dream 48). In Dream 100, however, only three of six Perfections (Perfection of

practices prescribed as treatments, which we will discuss below: the conditional clause "if he has been diligent, he will come into possession of *dhāraṇī*s" here can be understood as being effectively the same as "he should be diligent; then he will come into possession of *dhāraṇī*s." Both kinds of activities can be described as good behaviors that bodhisattvas should carry out with self-awareness, and both are determinants of a bodhisattva's progress. However, there are still some distinctions between them; most importantly, the treatments appear to act more like antidotes to a bodhisattva's obstructions (the antidote is often good behavior concerning the same subject as the misbehavior that caused the karmic obstruction of the bodhisattva in question; for example, the unwholesome karma of showing disrespect to Dharma preachers should be counterbalanced by paying homage to them), while the advantageous conditions here are more general.

Receptivity, Perfection of Vigor, and Perfection of Wisdom) are required of bodhisattvas who dream of weapons.

Conviction (Dreams 52, 98, 66), mental equanimity (Dreams 19, 87), and receptivity to the profound dharmas (Dreams 6, 9, 32, 46, 78, 100) are still other antidotes that frequently recur in the text. Meditation-related advice is also given: for example, to "[practice] recollection of the Buddha" (**buddhānusmṛti*; Dream 31) or concentrate on the Three Gates of Liberation (**vimokṣa-mukha*), namely, emptiness (**śūnyatā*; Dream 33), wishlessness (**apraṇihita*; Dream 51), and signlessness (**ānimitta*; Dream 39). Similarly, bodhisattvas are often ordered to meditate in seclusion (Dream 9), or even to "go to a mountain retreat without contact with the fourfold assemblies" (Dream 77). Even without explicitly mentioning meditation, in Dream 53, bodhisattvas who dream of traveling through the sky are ordered to "not stay in the same place with people for a long duration" (Dream 53). Further, many of the instructions revolve around giving. Bodhisattvas are sometimes especially warned not to hide any of their belongings (Dream 83), which may perhaps reflect the bitterness of the author(s) toward bodhisattvas who are reluctant to donate everything. Further, many instructions concern a bodhisattva's attitude: for example, bodhisattvas should "show gratitude" (Dream 67) and "not pick others' faults" (Dream 28). They should restrain themselves from "being hostile toward people" (Dream 20), "hypocrisy" (Dream 68), "pride in [their] superior knowledge" (Dream 62), and "jealousy" (Dream 61). Interestingly, more than one dream advises bodhisattvas to ask more questions (Dreams 59, 63).

Serving others is yet another example of moral behavior. Bodhisattvas are recommended to serve not only acquaintances but also other people (Dream 70). Among the people to be served, virtuous spiritual friends (Dreams 45, 71) and Dharma preachers are most prominent, perhaps because they can assist bodhisattvas in understanding the Dharma: in Dream 71, virtuous spiritual friends are said to be able to remove a bodhisattva's doubts about the Dharma. Dharma preachers, on the other hand, should apparently be the focal point of a bodhisattva's reverence. Bodhisattvas should serve them sincerely (Dreams 43, 94), secure their livelihood (Dream 92), and even "offer Dharma preachers everything, without holding anything back" (Dream 23). In the text, Dharma preachers even enjoy as high a status as the Tathāgata's:[65] in Dream 11, a sinful bodhisattva should hold a lamp in front of a Dharma preacher or the Tathāgata's stūpa all night, which effectively equates the authority of Dharma preachers with the symbol of the Tathāgata. Naturally, stūpas—the symbol of the Tathāgata—are also to be swept and honored (Dreams 5, 7).

[65] The "conflation of the figure of the preacher with the figure of a Buddha" can be observed in many Mahāyāna texts (Nance 2008, 143–144).

Listening to the Dharma appears essential for the audience of the text. Studying the Dharma (or, more literally, listening to the Dharma) is named as a cure in various cases (e.g., Dreams 2, 8, 46, 58). Equally important is persuading others to listen to the Dharma. Bodhisattvas should attract others to learn the Dharma (Dream 34); to better carry out this mission, they are required to learn the four articles of attraction[66] (Dream 100) and practice eloquence (**pratibhāna*) (Dreams 3, 57, 95). As eloquence is an essential quality of Dharma preachers, the text's emphasis on the necessity of cultivating eloquence shows that, to progress on the path toward enlightenment, bodhisattvas must transition from listening to the Dharma to actively preaching the Dharma.[67]

The above practices, though covering a vast range of activities, overlap with the common bodhisattva practices attested in Mahāyāna scriptures.[68] Moreover, the urgency of listening to the Dharma and of honoring Dharma preachers echoes the most belabored causes of karmic obstructions: as pointed out in the section on karmic obstructions, in many cases, bodhisattvas are said to inherit grievously unwholesome karma for their former disrespect to Dharma preachers and the Dharma. Therefore, though the obstructions and their antidotes do not necessarily correspond in individual cases, on a larger scale, the antidotes are clearly designed to counteract the effects of karmic obstruction based on the general mechanism of karmic fruition and retribution.

Triskandhaka Dharma discourse

Among all these treatments, one category of instructions worth special attention is those that explicitly refer to another Dharma discourse, the **Triskandhaka Dharmaparyāya*—the only intertextual reference explicitly made in the *SvN* (Dreams 2, 18, 21, 41).

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[66] Namely, the *saṃgraha-vastu*: "there are four of these: *dāna*, *priya-vacana* (or the like), *artha-caryā* (or *-kriyā*), and *samānārthatā* (or *samānasukhaduḥkhatā*)" (Edgerton 1953, II: 548; e.g., in the *Lalitavistara*, see Hokazono 1994, 346.4−5), i.e., offerings, loving words, beneficial conduct, and sharing the same aims (the exact meaning of the last one is debatable).

[67] Cf. Gummer (2012, 154): "moving from listening to speaking is a crucial and transformative step in the process of becoming a buddha." In the *Dbh*, bodhisattvas start by listening to the Dharma from the Buddha and preaching to others; they will then become great Dharma preachers in the ninth *bhūmi*, "thus, o son of the Conqueror, a bodhisattva in this way who is skilled in the production of knowledge (*jñānābhinirhāra*) of the [four] special [rhetoric] knowledges (*pratisaṃvid*) has reached the ninth *bhūmi*; he has mastered the collection of Teachings (*dharmakośa*) of the Tathāgata; he is acting as a great Dharma preacher" (Skt. *sa evaṃ pratisaṃvidāṃ jñānābhinirhārakuśalo bho jinaputra bodhisattvo navamīṃ bodhisattvabhūmim anuprāptas tathāgatadharmakośaprāpto mahādharmabhāṇakatvaṃ kurvāṇaḥ*, Kondō 1936, 162.14−16; for discussion on this passage, see Watanabe 2017, 94; for the term *jñānābhinirhāra*, cf. Edgerton 1953, II: 53 and Kern and Nanjio 1912, 82.10). As for the prerequisite of becoming a Dharma preacher, though obtaining eloquence is necessary for bodhisattvas to become Dharma preachers, it is apparently not sufficient. The *SvN* is ambiguous about this issue; in Dream 61, a bodhisattva who is "excellent in eloquence" could be in as low as one of the first three *bhūmi*s. Moreover, in the *SvN*, Dharma preachers are depicted as superior figures throughout the text; there seems to be no implication that bodhisattvas will eventually become Dharma preachers at a certain *bhūmi*.

[68] For example, it is comparable to the bodhisattva practices in the *Gṛhapaty-Ugra-paripṛcchā* (*Ugra*, hereafter); see Nattier 2003, 103–136.

This thread of intertextuality provides a rare opportunity to situate the *SvN* in a broader doctrinal context. Moreover, this doctrinal context will also afford us a new perspective for understanding how the essential elements of the *SvN*—namely, obstructions, antidotes, and dreams—are connected ideologically.

First, what is the *Triskandhaka*? Though this Dharma discourse has left countless traces in a large corpus of Mahāyāna scriptures, what the scriptures report about it varies significantly.

Let us first look at how this Dharma discourse is discussed in its six references in the *SvN*. Note that only the Tibetan translation prescribes the recitation of the Dharma discourse of the *Triskandhaka* (Tib. *phung po gsum pa*) specifically, literally, the Three Heaps; the Chinese, on the other hand, is ambiguous. The counterparts of *phung po gsum pa* in Chinese are either 净心 ("purifying the mind") or 懺悔 ("confession, repentance"),[69] and they are all modified by the precise instruction of "in three time periods in the daytime and three time periods in the night,"[70] even when such details are absent in the Tibetan. Though the Tibetan text commonly designates the *Triskandhaka* as a "Dharma discourse," it also once refers to it as a sūtra (Tib. *phung po gsum pa'i mdo sde*; Dream 21).[71] While later scholars frequently refer to the *triskandhaka* ritual,[72] the *SvN* does not describe it as anything more than a recitation at

[69] It is unclear why the Chinese rendition is only "confession" or "purification" instead of a more literal rendition of *Triskandhaka*, like "three divisions," "three heaps," or "three parts." Given the fact that the literal rendition of the *Triskandhaka* was already known to Chinese Buddhists since at least the late second century (i.e., Chn. 三品經事 in the earliest translation of the *Ugra,* i.e., the *Fajing jing* 法鏡經, T. 322, 18c28), it should not be the case that the translator(s) of the *SvN* was (were) not aware of this Dharma discourse. Therefore, it is either that the Indic manuscript on which the Chinese translation was based does not read *Triskandhaka* (but those on which the Tibetan text was based do), or the translator(s) preferred to render it more freely. Similarly, in the *Gaṇḍavyūha*, the place where the Sanskrit reads *triskandha-deśanā* (Suzuki and Izdumi 1949, 518.12) is also translated by *Śikṣānanda 實叉難陀 as "confession in three time periods" 三時懺悔 (T. 279, 436b29, though, of course, we cannot ascertain that the Chinese translation was made from the exact surviving Sanskrit recension). This Chinese rendition of the phrase *triskandha-deśanā* seems to understand it as a compound: the *triskandhaka* confession equals confession in three time periods. The relationship between the two terms—*triskandha* and *deśanā*—is perhaps as Haskett (2010, 113) has observed: "Although *deśanā* is one of the three *skandhas*, the three as a group are referred to as *deśanā* as well." Therefore, no matter which of the above two possibilities is true, this rendition in the Chinese text of the *SvN* shows that "confession" is the essential part of the *Triskandhaka*. Note that while the Chinese character 懺 in 懺悔 is generally considered a transliteration of Skt. *kṣama* (Hirakawa 1990, 431, 438−439; however, Hirakawa himself disputes that this term is probably not derived from Sanskrit), in Mahāyāna scriptures, 懺悔 generally corresponds to Skt. *(pāpa-/prati-)deśanā* (ibid., 445).

[70] For the time divisions indicated here, see Pas 1986 on the six daily periods of worship, especially the table on p. 54. In the Indian context, these six times are roughly "sunset, early night, midnight, late night, sunrise, midday" (ibid., 54).

[71] According to Kimura's (1980, 28–31) exhaustive survey of references to the *Triskandhaka* in Mahāyāna scriptures, it is designated as a Dharma discourse (*dharma-paryāya*) in a majority of sources, and is only referred to as a "sūtra" in a few Chinese translations and as the title of a Tibetan text (Tib. [*'phags pa*] *Phung po gsum pa zhes bya ba theg pa chen po'i mdo*, Skt., [*ārya-*]*Triskandhaka-nāma mahāyana-sūtra*, D284). Kimura (1980, 23) therefore concludes that two kinds of *Triskandhaka* were perhaps in circulation: 1) one not in sūtra format, as is referred to in the *Ugra* and **Vimaladattā-paripṛcchā* (*Ligou shinü jing,* 離垢施女經, T. 338); 2) an extended one in sūtra format. Nattier (2013, 118–119, n. 29) also notes that the mention in the *Ugra* "referred simply to a dharma-text in general—not to a 'sūtra' in the narrow sense." In the case of the *SvN*, it seems that the *Triskandhaka* referred to here is rather a Dharma discourse (i.e., not in a standardized sūtra format), and there is no reason to believe that by designating it as a sūtra, any kind of differentiation is intended. Rather, the Tib. *mdo sde* here may only be a casual way of specifying the *Triskandhaka* as a scripture.

[72] For example, see Haskett 2010, 249.

a fixed time and for a fixed period. The length of this period ranges from one month (Dream 18) to seven years (Dreams 2, 41). The purpose of the recitation is stated clearly as being "for the sake of purification" (Dream 2), or more specifically, "to clear away karmic obstructions" (Dream 21, which may or may not apply to every instance of its use).

The bodhisattvas who are ordered to perform this recitation have committed a variety of offenses. But just as Mitsukawa (1982, 140–141) has observed, the six dreams that mention the *Triskandhaka* share certain similarities: the bodhisattvas depicted in these dreams are all flawed in terms of their attitude and behavior toward the Dharma. In Dream 18, the fact that "even after he became a monk, he criticized the Dharma out of hypocrisy" inflicts a month of recitation on a bodhisattva, whereas in Dream 41, the karmic obstruction of the bodhisattva who "once felt remorse and abandoned the Dharma" sentences him to seven years of recitation. Though in Dream 69, only a bodhisattva of the first *bhūmi* has to recite the discourse, other dreams show that the recitation is also applicable to bodhisattvas of a much higher *bhūmi*; for example, up to the seventh *bhūmi*. In Dream 2, expiating the vaguely worded offense of "obstructing the Dharma" demands that a bodhisattva recite this discourse from one to seven years depending on their *bhūmi* (the more advanced they are, the less time they need to spend on confession). This fact leads Mitsukawa (ibid., 141) to suspect that the *Triskandhaka* is especially vital for beginners.

To summarize, in the *SvN*, bodhisattvas recite the Dharma Discourse of the *Triskandhaka* six times a day for a set period of time to purify the obstructions caused by their offenses against the Dharma. Neither the content nor details of performing this Dharma discourse are specified.

The lack of detail on the Dharma discourse is not at all surprising: not only the compiler(s) of this text, but also those of a large number of other scriptures fail to provide any details. Perhaps this fact illustrates the popularity of this discourse. However, such popularity only makes the *Triskandhaka*'s content and implications more obscure to modern readers.

Several texts designated as *Triskandhaka* in Sanskrit, Tibetan, and Chinese are available to us. However, as possibly one of the first Mahāyāna texts (Hirakawa 1989a, 217–220),[73] accounts of the content of the *Triskandhaka* varies significantly in

[73] Hirakawa's conclusion is based on the date of the *Triskandhaka*'s first appearances in Chinese translations (external evidence) and its relationship with other early doctrines (internal evidence). First, as mentioned above, the *Triskandhaka* is referred to in the earliest translation of the *Ugra—Fajing jing*, which was produced between 168 and 189 CE (Hirakawa 1989a, 218). This translation is among the earliest Chinese Buddhist texts. This means the *Triskandhaka* was already in circulation before this date. Secondly, since in the *Vimaladattā-paripṛcchā*, the *Triskandhaka* is listed side by side with the **Bodhisattvapiṭaka* (菩薩藏; see T. 338, 95c7−13), if we accept the *Bodhisattvapiṭaka* as a very early doctrine, then the *Triskandhaka* must also belong to this group of earliest Mahāyāna doctrine (Hirakawa 1989a, 220). Note that the specific content of the *Bodhisattvapiṭaka* mentioned here is impossible to be ascertained as the term is used to refer to a wide range of texts and categories of texts (ibid., 221−223; Pagel 1995, 7−36). The *Bodhisattvapiṭaka* here clearly does not correspond to the extended

different sources. Moreover, the relevant sources not only point to a text that may have expanded over time, but present a complicated testimony that is sometimes even self-contradictory. Further, the *Triskandhaka* appeared in written form only after it had been referred to many times in the early Mahāyāna sūtras, and "even as late as the 8th century CE Śāntideva [in his *Śikṣ*] refers to what is to be done with *Triskandhaka* not as 'writing' or 'reading' but as *pravartana*, a term which might best be translated here as 'performance'" (Nattier 2003, 120). This fact makes the early development of the *Triskandhaka* harder to trace—and the search for a written record of the *Triskandhaka* that is most comparable to the *Triskandhaka* of the *SvN* may well be in vain.

Given the opaque textual history of the *SvN*, it is no trivial task to determine which account of the *Triskandhaka* most closely corresponds to the text as known by the *SvN*. Interestingly, much of the earliest evidence of the so-called *Triskandhaka* Dharma discourse is found in the MRK collection, the only corpus affiliated with the *SvN*: namely, in the **Vimaladattā-paripṛcchā*,[74] the *Gṛhapaty-Ugra-paripṛcchā* (*Ugra*, hereafter),[75] the *Upāli-paripṛcchā* (*Upāli*, hereafter),[76] and the *Subāhu-paripṛcchā*.[77] I will place a higher value on the details of the *Triskandhaka* as found in these sūtras. But the evidence of the MRK still does not suffice to discover the implications of this important practice in the *SvN*, for which I will have to conduct a rather lengthy survey of the *Triskandhaka* itself.

Bodhisattvapiṭaka translated by Xuanzang, i.e., the twelfth text of the MRK collection, though some degree of connection cannot be ruled out. Another scripture included in the MRK—the **Pūrṇa-paripṛcchā* (seventeenth text of the MRK), according to catalogs, was also once titled as *Bodhisattvapiṭaka*. While Hirakawa implies that the *Pūrṇa-paripṛcchā* could be associated with the *Bodhisattvapiṭaka* mentioned in *Vimaladattā-paripṛcchā* to a certain degree (1989a, 221), some others, like Pagel (1995, 35−36), disagree.

[74] The Buddha tells Vimaladattā that through four things, bodhisattvas can accomplish eloquence. They are: "1) bearing the *Bodhisattvapiṭaka* in mind; 2) reciting the *Triskandhaka* day and night; 3) teaching others about the Dharma on the liberation from causes and conditions, since the *bodhi* (enlightenment) of buddhas is neither arising nor ceasing and is liberated from causes and conditions; and 4) receiving and keeping (the Dharma) even when sacrificing their life and property is necessary." Chn. 一者，持菩薩藏。二者，晝夜讀誦三聚法門。三者，為他人說離因緣法，以佛菩提不生不滅離因緣故。四者，歡喜受持，不惜身命及以財寶。*Dewugounü jing* 得無垢女經, T. 339, 105a24–29; cf. the correspondent passages in the *Ligoushinü jing* 離垢施女經, T. 338, 95c7–11 and the *Wugoushi pusa yingbian hui* 無垢施菩薩應辯會, T. 310 (33), 562b20–24. All three versions agree on these four things. In addition, Martini (2013, 40, n. 75) also offers a partial translation of the above list from the Tibetan text of this *Vimaladattā-paripṛcchā*. The *SvN* also makes a very vague reference to "eloquence on four things" (Dream 62), which may be relevant, though it is impossible to determine whether the *SvN* is referring to the same four things as presented here.

[75] T. 310 (19), 475c23–476a3. For Nattier's translations of this passage, see Nattier 2003, 259–260; for her discussion on its usage, see pp. 117–121 in the same book. A discussion on the *Triskandhaka* in this text is also included in Barnes 1993, 1–4 and Barnes 1999, 488–493.

[76] *Youboli hui* 優波離会, T. 310 (24), 515c18–516b10. The quotation is too long to quote here; further discussion on the *Triskandhaka* as cited in this text will follow. For a discussion on the *Triskandhaka* in this text, see Barnes 1993, 5–6, 8 and Barnes 1999, 494–500, as well as Fujinaka and Nakamikado 2011. The latter also includes a translation of a commentary on the *Triskandhaka* in the *Upāli* by Ye shes rgyal mtshan.

[77] "In order to become able to eliminate all desire and habits, this bodhisattva should undertake confession of all his faults during three time periods and he should give up all the impurities and the activities that defile the precepts." Chn. 是菩薩受持於三時中懺悔諸罪，捨出諸惡穢污戒，為得斷滅一切愛習氣故。*Shanbi pusa hui* 善臂菩薩會, T. 310 (26), 530b26–28.

Among the early Mahāyāna scriptures that relate to the *Triskandhaka*,[78] there are two important branches of texts that include contents intended for recitation explicitly by the term *Triskandhaka*: first, the *Upāli* quotes a Dharma discourse called **Triskandhaka* which is further cited by Śāntideva in the *Śikṣ* (Bendall 1902, 169.6–170.21). Parallels to this exist in Chinese,[79] Tibetan,[80] and Sanskrit.[81] Secondly, there is a textual lineage with the earliest and most prominent sūtra called *Shelifu huiguo jing* 舍利弗悔過經[82] (T. 1492).[83] According to Shizutani, the Dharma discourse presented in the *Shelifu huiguo jing* may correspond to the one that is briefly outlined in the *Ugra* (Shizutani 1974, 118–121; see also Nattier 2003, 121–122). In addition to those that directly employ the term *Triskandhaka*, there is also a vast body of texts that do not include the specific term but imply similar confession methods of three parts or more. Most such texts have been discussed by Shizutani (1974, 133–146).

In the following, I will review the descriptions of the *Triskandhaka* according to their contents, their performers, the offenses to be confessed, and visual aspects of the *triskandhaka* ritual.

First, there are several major discrepancies regarding the contents of the *Triskandhaka*. Although *Triskandhaka* means literally "the three heaps," there is no consensus as to which three "heaps" or "parts" are included. Most sources point to these three parts: 1) confession; 2) delight in all wholesome deeds; and 3) inviting the

[78] Since the *Triskandhaka* we encounter in the *SvN* is a "liturgical" Dharma discourse that is used for recitation, rather than a full text in sūtra format, we do not need to broaden our survey to those extended sūtras under the title *Triskandhaka*, such as D384, found in the Kanjur—a sūtra that probably represents a much later development. For a discussion and summary of this text, see Python 1981, 180–183.

[79] As a part of the *Upāli-paripṛcchā, Youboli hui* 優波離会 in the MRK collection, T. 310 (24), translated by Bodhiruci 菩提流志; 决定毘尼經 *Jueding pini jing* (T. 325, attributed to Dharmarakṣa, but with a question mark; see Barnes 1999, 494, n. 10; for a summary of the discussions on the authorship of this text, see also https://dazangthings.nz/cbc/text/1335/). There is also a standalone text that centers only on the ritual text, *Sanshiwu foming lichan wen* 三十五佛名礼懺文 (T. 326, translated by *Amoghavajra 不空). It is also partially included in the *Pusa shanjie jing* 菩薩善戒經 (T. 1582, 961a7–b21).

[80] *('phags pa) 'Dul ba rnam par gtan la dbab pa Nye bar 'khor gyis zhus pa zhes bya ba theg pa chen po'i mdo* (Skt. **Vinayaviniścaya-Upāli-paripṛcchā*, D68), edited and discussed by Python 1973.

[81] A Sanskrit manuscript of an unknown date that was written in Nepalese script and kept at Tokyo University was transcribed by Kimura (1980, 32–42). The reading of the manuscript is almost identical to the one cited in the *Śikṣ*; for a comparison between the two Sanskrit texts, see the footnotes in Kimura's article (ibid.).

[82] This translation is ascribed to An Shigao 安世高, but this attribution is very tenuous; see Shizutani 1974, 122 and Nakamikado 2000, 79–80, who claim this translation should be dated before the fifth century. A useful summary of the authorship of this text is also found at https://dazangthings.nz/cbc/text/4396/.

[83] Parallels of this text are, the *Pusa zang jing* 菩薩藏經 (T. 1491, tr. Sengqiepoluo 僧伽婆羅) and the *Dasheng sanju chanhui jing* 大乘三聚懺悔經 (T. 1493, translation work led by Shenajueduo 闍那崛多 [*Jñānagupta or *Jinagupta] and Jiduo 笈多). Barnes (1999, 501) has also noted a parallel text called *Sanmantuobatuoluo pusa jing* 三曼陀跋陀羅菩薩經 (T. 483, tr. Nie Daozhen 聶道真). Weber (1999, 161−166) argues that this text shares striking similarity with part of Yi Jing's translation of the *Suvarṇabhāsottama-sūtra* (T. 665, 413c29ff; Nobel 1958, 96ff). In addition to the Chinese translations, Shizutani (1974, 122) has identified a Tibetan text, (*'phags pa*) *Las kyi sgrib pa rgyun gcod pa zhes bya ba theg pa chen po'i mdo* (D219). Shizutani (ibid., 122–126) lists all the major discrepancies among the parallels of this group of texts; according to him, the *Shelifu huiguo jing* is significantly shorter and potentially much older than the other texts. As for a reconstucted Sanskrit title of the *Shelifu huiguo jing*, Python (1981, 180) and Weber (1999, 42, n. 31) seem confident that the Sanskrit title should be reconstructed as **Śāriputrakaukṛtya-sūtra* whereas Najio listed its Sanskrit title as **Śāriputrakṣamā-sūtra* with a question mark (Nanjio 1883, 244 §1106); none of them gives the reason or evidence behind their Sanskrit reconstructions.

Buddhas to teach the Dharma.[84] However, to further complicate the situation, even among the parallel versions of a single group of texts, the actual three parts differ. For example, in the case of the *Ugra*, though all three Chinese translations designate this Dharma discourse as literally the three-part or three-division Dharma, "not all of these three items, however, are attested in the earliest version of the *Ugra* [i.e., *Fajing jing*, T. 322], which lacks any mention of requesting the Buddhas to teach. Even more important, in all extant versions of the sūtra ritual the practice of rejoicing in the merit of others is said to precede the recitation of the *Triskandhaka*, rather than being contained within it" (Nattier 2013, 121). Comparable two-part methods of confession not only exist in the earliest version of the *Ugra*, but also in some of the earliest Mahāyāna scriptures (e.g., *Asheshiwang jing* 阿闍世王經, T. 626[85]). As in the case of the *Shelifu huiguo jing*, other parallel Chinese translations contain an additional part on "transferring merits," which renders the "three-part" Dharma discourse in fact a "four-part" one (Shizutani 1974, 133).

Second, there are different accounts in terms of the intended performers. The *Ugra* prescribes this ritual especially for bodhisattvas at home. Strangely, although the *Ugra* implies a close relationship between bodhisattvas at home and the Saṃgha, all versions of the *Ugra* specify that "this ritual is to be performed if the bodhisattva has no access to the three jewels" without further explanation (Nattier 2003, 118). The *Upāli,* on the other hand, indicates that this practice applies to monks and precisely stipulates that this confession performance should be carried out alone (which differs from the confession of transgressions that must also be performed in front of other monks;[86] T. 310 [24], 515c18–27). Unlike the cases of the *Ugra* and *Upāli*, where bodhisattvas are primarily concerned, the *Shelifu huiguo jing* extends the opportunity for confession to those who pursue the *arhat* path (Shizutani 1974, 124; Barnes 1999, 501–504).

Third, the faults to be confessed vary among the texts. In the *DZDL*, they are described simply as "unwholesome deeds and faults of body, speech, and mind that I have committed for countless *kalpa*s, in my present and past lives" (T. 1509, 110a4–5;

[84] For the description of these three parts in the *Śikṣ*, see Bendall 1902, 169.6–171.6 and its parallel Sanskrit text in Kimura 1980, 32–42; for an English translation of the *Śikṣ*, see Goodman 2016, 167–169. Similar three parts are also featured in the *Shelifu huiguo jing*, see Shizutani 1974, 127–130. The brief description of what Lamotte has reconstructed as *Triskandha* in *DZDL* also includes these three parts; see Lamotte 1944–1980, I: 422

[85] "The Buddha Aparājitadhvaja instructed the boy to take refuge in the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Saṃgha, and then gave him five precepts. [Afterwards,] he taught him to confess as well as rejoice in [others'] merits. [The boy] thus generated the thought of unsurpassable perfect enlightenment," Chn. 其佛阿波羅耆陀陀教導其兒，自歸佛及法，比丘僧，授與五戒。教令悔過，勸助功德，乃發阿耨多羅^三耶三菩心。T. 626, 394a17−20, Var. 三耶三菩] Sx, Pn: 三藐三菩提, Sg: 三耶三菩提. For brief discussions on this passage and comparable two-part confessions, see Nakamikado 2000, 81–82 and Shizutani 1974, 138.

[86] There is an overlap between the faults that must be confessed before other monks and those to be confessed by performing the *Triskandhaka* ritual: **pārājika* (波羅夷) and **saṃghāvaśeṣa* (僧殘, T. 310 [24], 515c18–27). The transgressions that must be confessed in a monastic setting are all transgressions listed in the *prātimokṣa*, and this confession ceremony is similar to the *upoṣadha* ceremony described in the Vinayas (Fujinaka and Nakamikado 2011, 166, n. 44). As we will very soon see, the range of offenses to be confessed by reciting the *Triskandhaka* is much broader.

Lamotte 1944–1980, I: 422).[87] In addition to these evil deeds, the list in the *Shelifu huiguo jing* subsequently mentions the five *ānantarya* offenses, the ten unwholesome deeds, and others "involving crimes of property against Buddhist religious sites or communities" (Nattier 2003, 120–121). The list included in the *Śikṣ* differs in its details from that of the *Shelifu huiguo jing*, but also deals with the same major categories of sins as in the *Shelifu huiguo jing* (Bendall 1902, 170.1–170.11; cf. in the *Upāli,* T. 310 (24), 516a13–21).

Fourth, some texts require bodhisattvas first to recite a list of the names of thirty-five Buddhas,[88] while others simply order bodhisattvas to recite the Dharma discourse "in front of Buddhas of ten directions." Based on this fact, Barnes (1993, 6–7) argues that this ritual attaches much importance to the "visualization" of the Buddhas, but she also acknowledges that visualization is not always an integral part of the practice.

A review of the sources on the *Triskandhaka* shows that what remains consistent throughout the tradition seems to be a recitation ritual including confession and rejoicing at a fixed time. In light of this overview, though it is still impossible to identify a single version of the *Triskandhaka* that fits the description found in the *SvN*, we can discern the respects in which the *Triskandha* of the *SvN* is distinct, and how we might establish its position in terms of the development of the confession method in Mahāyāna.

First, no other practice besides confession is implied by the term *Triskandhaka* in the *SvN*. Though we cannot rule out the possibility that the *SvN* simply neglects to mention "rejoicing in others' merits" and "inviting the Buddhas to teach the Dharma," no matter the reason behind it, it is quite telling that the Chinese translation simply renders it as "confession."[89] This shows that, as far as the *SvN* is concerned, the *Triskandhaka* is effectively a "confession" performance. Though the earliest version of the *Ugra* uses a term that may be reconstructed as *Triskandhaka*, but mentions only two parts of the performance out of three, it is possible that similar methods of confession for bodhisattvas were conventionally designated as *Triskandhaka*, no matter how many parts they comprised.

Second, the intended audience of the *SvN* is most probably bodhisattvas who have already given up their householder status. This contradicts the *Ugra*'s stance that the confession performance is specially designed for those who have no contact with the three jewels. However, the *SvN* indeed also implies that, in some cases, bodhisattvas are in a rather solitary position, even "without contacting the fourfold assemblies" (Dream 77). The text mentions no other circumstances of the actual confession, and it is impossible to tell whether it was intended to be a public performance or a private one.

[87] Chn. 我某甲若今世，若過世無量劫，身口意惡業罪.
[88] There are also lists of fifteen to twenty-five Buddhas (Shizutani 1974, 125).
[89] It is worth noting here that in Dream 11, the Tibetan text also reads "he should also confess his evil deeds (Skt. **pāpa*) in three time periods in the daytime and three time periods in the night" (*nyin lan gsum mtshan lan gsum du sdig pa yang bshags par bya*) instead of using the term *Triskandhaka.*

Third, regarding the content of the confession, the *SvN* is clearly most concerned with karmic obstructions, especially those caused by offenses bodhisattvas might have committed against the Dharma or Dharma preachers in the past. This anxiety is reflected in every version of *Triskandhaka* we have discussed above, yet such anxiety is especially strong in the *Shelifu huiguo jing*.[90] Further, unlike the *SvN* and the *Shelifu huiguo jing*, the *Upāli* seems to contain an undertone of deeper concern about offenses committed with awareness.[91] In this sense, the *SvN* is closer to the *Shelifu huiguo jing.* Indeed, as pointed out by Fujichika (1995, esp. 24–26), texts related to the *Triskandhaka* all express strong anxiety about karmic obstructions. The anxieties of these early Mahāyāna scriptures stand in stark contrast to anxieties over transgressions such as *pārājikas* in the Pāli Vinayas. The methods of repentance are therefore also very different (ibid., 22–23). It is noteworthy that the chapter on "eliminating karmas" (Chapter Ten, **Karmāvaraṇa-pratiprasrabdhi* 除業品) in the *SZPPSL* also centers on such anxieties. Interestingly, the method of confession documented in this chapter is essentially an extended version of the *Triskandhaka* ritual (Shizutani 1974, 134−135). This fact shows that this method of confession is not alien to the discussion of bodhisattva *bhūmi*s.[92]

Fourth, unlike some *Triskandhaka* texts that open with the recitation of specific buddhas' names, the *SvN* mentions no buddha other than the Śākyamuni Buddha; however, as argued by Barnes (1993, 7), the ritual of revering and inviting the Buddhas to teach the Dharma is in fact about the buddhas' presence. Through her discussion on "meditation sūtras" that includes the *Triskandhaka*,[93] she further argues that visionary

[90] "If some sons or daughters of good [families] wish to pursue the path of buddhas, [but] if they have committed evil deeds in their past lives, how should they confess?" Chn. 若有善男子，善女人意欲求佛道，若前世為惡，當^用何悔之乎，T. 1492, 1090a7–9; var. 用何] Kr. 何用.

[91] "If a bodhisattva has committed the five offenses of immediate retribution, or the **pārājika*s, or the **saṃghāvaśeṣa*s, or any offense regarding the Saṃgha, stūpa, monks, etc., he should deeply confess in front of the thirty-five buddhas by himself day and night." Chn. 若諸菩薩成就五無間罪，犯波羅夷、或犯僧殘戒、犯塔、犯僧及犯餘罪，菩薩應當於三十五佛前，晝夜獨處殷重懺悔，T. 310 (24), 515c22–25. While the list of offenses is as above, the text of the *Triskandhaka* as cited in the *Upāli* also emphasizes the offenses committed in past lives. As has been discussed elsewhere, the list of sins in the *Triskandhaka* Dharma discourse is quite similar among the *Upāli,* the *Shelifu huiguo jing,* and their parallels.

[92] However, we must note that, the *SZPPSL* frequently includes ideas and doctrines that can be seen as divergent from the *Dbh*; the discrepancies between the two texts will be revisited in Chapter 6, n. 72.

[93] Barnes's (1999, 508–512) argument is mainly built on her observations of two "meditation" texts concerning "some version of *Triskandhaka*" (ibid., 509), namely, the *Guan xukongzang pusa jing* 觀虛空藏菩薩經 T. 409 and the *Guan puxian pusa xingfa jing* 觀普賢菩薩行法經 T. 277 (for background on the latter's "translation," see Funayama 2004, 108–109). In these two texts, the sight of the Bodhisattva Ākāśagarbha or the Buddhas is intertwined throughout the course of the confession. However, what Barnes designates as "meditation sūtras" all belong to a distinct group of scriptures that are often called "Contemplation Scriptures" (*guan jing* 觀經) in recent scholarship. This group of scriptures "all appeared in south China during the Song dynasty, and their origin and nature as either translations or Chinese compositions has been hotly disputed" (Greene 2012, 82; for a more detailed discussion on this matter, see his notes, pp. 82–83 n. 18; see also Greene 2021b, 144, n. 101). Kuo (2019, 218), on the other hand, linked this group of scriptures with Northwest China. No matter where in China the texts were produced, they can hardly be viewed as Indian texts (Silk 2008 [2010], 381). The Contemplation Scriptures and related fifth-century Chinese apocryphal scriptures share an emphasis on the association between rituals of repentence and visionary elements, which led Kuo (2019, 218) to the conclusion that "All these sūtras […] prescribe repentance practices in which visions play a great part. No Indian sūtra does it." Nonetheless, as can be seen from the *Upāli* and a large corpus of scriptures of quite certain Indian origin that I will present in Chapter 4, there are in

elements are often integrated into the confession ritual, as shown in the *Upāli*[94] (Barnes 1999, 499, 510–511). This tradition of "visionary confession" has also been noticed by Yamabe (2005, 28–36). Though both Barnes and Yamabe understood this practice more as "visualization" or "meditation," an issue that I will revisit in Chapter 4, the mechanism behind it is very similar to that in the *SvN*—that is, visions (i.e., a dream or a vision obtained during meditation) are recognized as signs of the necessity or success of confession rituals.

In this way, the *Triskandhaka*, as an important soteriological method, links the elimination of obstructions with signs (dreams). Its frequency in the Mahāyāna scriptures, especially the early ones, also connects the *SvN* with the broader context of confession in Mahāyāna.

To summarize, the practices recommended in the *SvN* are clearly intended to remedy the obstructions of the bodhisattvas. As emphasized many times in this text, such obstructions are mainly caused by behaviors against the Dharma; the antidotes are therefore mostly practices offering support to the Dharma and Dharma preachers. Further, by reviewing the nature of the diagnoses and treatments, we see a sharp contrast between them: diagnoses address conditions that are supposedly beyond a bodhisattva's knowledge, whether good or bad, in the past or future. In such settings, bodhisattvas always assume a passive role: they are the "recipients" of prophecies or favor, "inheritors" of karmic obstructions, or victims of Māra. The treatments, on the other hand, are practices that are to be carried out consciously by bodhisattvas. The anxiety over not knowing his state impels a bodhisattva's need for diagnosis and antidotes.

After prescribing a treatment, the text goes on to give the bodhisattva a very brief but reassuring prognosis.

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fact many Indian sūtras that do this. Also, even if those Contemplations Scriptures were not genuine "Indic texts," as Silk (2008 [2010], 372) concluded when discussing another Contemplation Scripture, *Guan Wuliangshoufo jing* 觀無量壽佛經: "while the text was compiled or brought together in China or Chinese-speaking Central Asia, it nevertheless contains genuine Indic elements which must have been derived directly from Indian traditions." In my opinion, though the juxtaposition of repentance and visions flourished in fifth-century Chinese apocryphal works, this association can also be traced back to India. The juxtaposition of repentance and visions will be highlighted in Chapter 4.

[94] "Śāriputra, a bodhisattva who comes face to face with those thirty-five Buddhas in this way, and observes them attentively, clears away all vile actions. To someone who has cleared away all vile actions in this way, the Buddhas, Blessed Ones, show their faces, with the sole goal of setting sentient beings free. They show their appearance with various marks in order to help confused ordinary people to mature" (Goodman 2016, 168; Skt. *Śāriputra bodhisatvenemān pañcatriṃśato buddhān pramukhān kṛtvā sarvatathāgatānugatair manasikāraiḥ pāpaśuddhiḥ kāryā / tasyaivaṃ sarvapāpaviśuddhasya tatra ca buddhā bhagavanto mukhāny upadarśayanti satvavimokṣārtham eva / nānāvyañjanākāram upadarśayanti vibhrāntabālapṛthagjanānāṃ paripācanāhetoḥ,* Bendall 1902, 171.1–4). Goodman (2016, 390, n. xxxv) has noted that the Tibetan translates *vyañjana* as "letters." Though this meaning of *vyañjana* is well attested in Buddhist Sanskrit texts (Edgerton 1953, II: 514), here I think the context suggests it should rather be understood as a synonym of *ākāra*, i.e., sign. In Nakamikado's (2017, 136) Japanese translation of the *Upāli*, although he has cited the Chinese translation and the Tibetan translation in which *vyañjana* is rendered otherwise (Bodhiruci's translation reads "signs" [相] while the Tibetan renders it as "words" [*tshig 'bru*]; ibid., 147, n. 17), he uses "adorned forms" (飾られた姿) instead.

Prognosis

As they predict a bodhisattva's future after taking the prescribed "medicines," the prognoses are always optimistic. This optimism is embodied in the stock phrase "then, that karmic obstruction of his will be cleared away, and he will certainly proceed toward enlightenment." Among the 108 dreams, more than two-thirds of them make this statement, though many contain only half of the sentence—mostly "he will certainly progress toward enlightenment." The prognoses again confirm that karmic obstructions are the foremost obstacle to gaining enlightenment, and their removal is necessary (yet not sufficient) for obtaining enlightenment.

The Full Picture

The *SvN* addresses bodhisattvas who feel stuck somewhere on their path to enlightenment. They want to know their current progress and what is hindering them from achieving enlightenment. Dreams, as diagnostic means, inform bodhisattvas of their current developmental stage, and provide explanations about their obstructive and/or favorable circumstances. After eliminating a bodhisattva's uncertainty about his current situation, the text further gives him corresponding instructions—confession and other practices to purify his obstructions—and finally promises him smooth progress to enlightenment.

The practices and concerns of bodhisattvas as included in this text are rich, yet lack obvious parallels. It is our hope to find them a position in the development of Mahāyāna doctrines in the next chapter.