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## **Dreaming the path: diagnosing Bodhisattva progress in early Mahāyāna**

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## Chapter 6

# Treatment: Resolution of Bodhisattvas’ Uncertainty

Chapter 5 concluded with two questions for this chapter: What methods of resolving the uncertainty over the bodhisattva career can we discern from the sūtras concerning the schemes of a bodhisattva’s development? How did such intentional resolutions, to some extent, shape the development of the notion of *bhūmi*? In answering these questions, this chapter will outline four representative approaches to resolving the uncertainty that a bodhisattva may have regarding his career progress and prospects. The first two deal more with assuring bodhisattvas of future buddhahood, either through providing multiple possible routes to enlightenment, or emphasizing the decisive importance of one’s gradual self-cultivation in terms of his enlightenment. The other two concern themselves more with avoiding the difficulties regarding the confirmation of bodhisattvas’ spiritual attainment, either through negating the necessity of knowing one’s progress, or raising the bodhisattva ideal to a height that is beyond common practitioners of Mahāyāna Buddhism.

### Various Paths, One Destination

This survey will start from the most chaotic accounts of the bodhisattva path. As has been discussed, even if the bodhisattva path is primarily modeled on the narratives of the Bodhisattva’s progress to enlightenment, at a preliminary stage in the notion of the bodhisattva career scheme there may not have existed a unified correlation between the developmental stages and practices or achievement. Moreover, it is questionable if the plan of a bodhisattva’s practices and attainments should be fixed and generic in the first place. What if, as related in some narratives, people believe that there might be several slightly varied paths to the same destination, in accordance with individual faculty and identity? If no unified plan or mutually compatible plans exist, it is reasonable to assume the followers of such plans would feel uncertain about which way to go, and if they have already set off, which developmental stage they are in. Indeed, some models of the bodhisattva career—such as that in the *SvN*—do not seem to stick to one fixed plan. Other scriptures—for example, the *Śūraṅgamasamādhi*—give optional paths that lead to one aim. Under such circumstances, how do the scriptures manage to encourage bodhisattvas to take up the bodhisattva career and assure them of a successful outcome?

This problem can certainly be cleared up as long as a widely accepted unified model of the bodhisattva career emerges. However, this issue of unification is intertwined with other problems.<sup>1</sup> For now, I will leave aside how a unification model was finally achieved. We will first see how uncertainty is resolved even when divergent models of the path coexist.

Before this, however, I wish to clarify what I mean by multiple paths. We have noted that one confusing characteristic of models of the bodhisattva path is the existence of multiple schemes of the path(s) within one scripture. Yet such inclusion of multiple bodhisattva career plan systems does not necessarily recognize multiple paths to buddhahood. Some exegeses clearly include multiple schemes to build a consistent yet comprehensive system of *the* bodhisattva career. Most typically, the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* and its subcommentaries provide “two interrelated, yet distinct, modes of envisioning the bodhisattva path” (Apple 2011b, 177). However, as we have seen several times in this dissertation, another commentary on the *Prajñāpāramitās*, the *DZDL*, explicitly demonstrates alternative ways to gain irreversibility and prophecy. To be sure, the coexistence of structured models and alternative prerequisites for certain attainments is also most likely to indicate an inclusive strategy on the part of the compiler(s). Still, this inclusiveness shows that the *DZDL* recognizes more than one possibility for the path to buddhahood.<sup>2</sup>

Starting from the most extreme example of chaotic plans we have seen so far, there is the *SvN*’s view of the bodhisattva career, which we have analyzed at length. The text claims a bodhisattva’s peculiar situation—his distinct past karma, personality, and intelligence—has an all-around influence on his progress. For this reason, as well as

<sup>1</sup> I believe a unified model can only be realized under certain sociohistorical conditions and doctrinal frameworks. First, from the perspective of sociohistorical background, a unified model of the bodhisattva path can only be made possible if the social circumstances allow certain doctrines to be widely transmitted and acknowledged among different communities of practitioners. However, given the scarcity of sociohistorical materials on the background of the early Mahāyāna communities, we can hardly conclude anything from this perspective. We only know that, as suggested by the *SvN*, the divergent teachings of Dharma preachers likely played an important role in the divergence of the models of the bodhisattva path. Second, from the perspective of doctrinal backgrounds, I believe that a unified model can only exist on a theoretical level. Admittedly, a prescriptive model—unlike a descriptive or diagnostic one—only intends to provide generic knowledge regardless of the particular situations and states. But while it is true that prescriptions of practices can be applied universally, practically speaking, prescriptions of a set of practices—achievements are only possible when they are not concerned with real-life situations. That is to say, if we imagine the bodhisattva path as a series of school programs, while the textbook (cf. knowledge and practice of the bodhisattva path) can be generic, the textbook alone cannot guarantee a student’s grade (cf. achievement or *bhūmi* of a bodhisattva); as it also depends on students’ faculties and other factors, extra assessment is needed. Therefore, as long as a bodhisattva’s progress is influenced by his own faculties, his karmic past, and external agencies, a refined unified model that strictly correlates practices and *bhūmis* is impossible. I will elaborate later on how the bodhisattva-*bhūmi* schemes become theoretical.

<sup>2</sup> The *DZDL* refers to three sets (or two, according to some scholars) of *bhūmi* systems which suggests its inclusiveness, which I have covered in the introduction to this thesis (see n. 31 in the Introduction). Most importantly, the compilers of the *DZDL* were clearly aware of the system of the *Dbh* and once designated the tenth *bhūmi* as *\*dharmamegha-bhūmi* (T. 1509, 419b23–25) whereas the base version of the *LP* it comments on, i.e., the *Mohe banreboluomi jing* (摩訶般若波羅蜜經, T. 223) mentions no *bhūmi* scheme resembling that of the *Dbh*. On this, as we have discussed, some scholars such as Hirakawa (1989b, 189–191) believe that the *DZDL* equates the unnamed *bhūmis* with the *bhūmis* of the *Dbh* whereas others (e.g., Sawazaki 2022, 45) argue that the *DZDL* does not attempt to reconcile these three systems of *bhūmis*.

due to its complicated textual layers, the *SvN* in fact gives divergent practice-achievement as well as achievement-*bhūmi* correlations. Facing such a tricky situation, the text uses dreams to communicate between a bodhisattva, his current attainments and obstructions, and the prescribed practices. Although this resolution is logical on its own merits and in its own context, per our previous analysis, using signs to diagnose and prognose one's condition and future is problematic and should not be the preferable way to resolve the uncertainty. This prompts us to look at how the other models that recognize multiple models resolve the problem.

In the previous discussion of prophecy, we have seen that the *Śūraṅgamasamādhi-sūtra* recognizes four types of predictions that are gained under different conditions, but the text explicitly recommends the last type by illustrating it with the Buddha and integrating it into a standard model of the whole bodhisattva career.<sup>3</sup> The teaching on prediction in this text suggests that, on the one hand, there is one supreme path to buddhahood, which is modeled after the Bodhisattva; on the other hand, there is still flexibility regarding the bodhisattva career.<sup>4</sup> Thus, this fourfold classification of prediction successfully settles the conflict between multiple possible paths to enlightenment and one generic path and it assures bodhisattvas that buddhahood can be attained under many conditions.

Next, I would like to look at a similar example that has been quoted in Chapter 2—the *DZDL* elucidates irreversibility as follows (**Passage I**):

Some people claim: “There are two kinds of irreversibility: first, [irreversibility that is feasible] for someone who has obtained a prediction; second, for someone who has not yet obtained a prediction. There are two kinds of obtainment of prediction: first, obtaining a prediction in the presence [of a buddha]; second, obtaining a prediction not in the presence [of a buddha]. There are two kinds of predictions that are obtained not in the presence [of a buddha]: first, for someone who has fulfilled the conditions of a prediction; second, for someone who has not yet fulfilled the conditions of a prediction. One who has fulfilled the conditions of a prediction is someone who has realized the true character of dharmas, and is endowed with the six Perfections. One who has not yet fulfilled the conditions of

<sup>3</sup> As I have mentioned previously, the text itself does not specify which kind of prediction is referred to within the scheme of the bodhisattva career. However, since the prediction is conditioned by receptivity to the nonproduction of dharmas, it is almost certain that the prediction is the so-called “prediction made in the presence of him who has acquired the certainty of the non-arising of dharmas” (Lamotte 1998, 182 §100.4).

<sup>4</sup> To be sure, it is likely that this *Śūraṅgamasamādhi* is based on multiple sources that are not intended to be coherent on the whole. Indeed, as noticed by Lamotte (ibid., 141, n. 111 §4), there are cases where the authors contradict themselves. Even so, the conclusion here remains valid, since the part on the four types already indicates that the last type of prediction is superior and representative of that which *the* Bodhisattva received on *the* Bodhisattva path.

a prediction is someone who has realized the true character of dharmas and only possesses the partial endowment of the Perfection of Wisdom but not the rest.”<sup>5</sup>

By naming four different conditions under which a bodhisattva acquires irreversibility, this passage indicates that there are multiple paths to irreversibility that are pertinent to an individual’s distinct situation. Elsewhere, the text also explicitly claims that “there are various gates, various paths toward this Perfection of Wisdom.”<sup>6</sup> But does this commentary, and the scripture that it comments on—the *LP*—have a perception of the bodhisattva career more like that of the *SvN*, where the plan(s) is so chaotic that bodhisattvas can only follow their own path through the guidance of dreams? This example alone seems insufficient to answer the question. The *DZDL*, in fact, repeatedly discusses the issue of varied paths to prediction and irreversibility. Although we must always cautiously take the “polyphonic style” (Zacchetti 2021, 94) of this commentary into consideration, and the claims presented in this text sometimes contradict each other, nonetheless, the discussions still exhibit a similar spirit.

The above passage concerns itself mainly with irreversibility and prediction. The one below (**Passage II**) rather centers on the relationship between irreversibility and the attainment of receptivity to the nonproduction of dharmas:

Question: if [one of] the characteristics of irreversibility is the obtainment of receptivity to the nonproduction of dharmas, why does [an irreversible bodhisattva] still perform bad deeds with a superficial mind?

Answer: There are two kinds of irreversibility: 1) [irreversibility that is appropriate] for a bodhisattva who has attained receptivity to the nonproduction of dharmas; 2) [irreversibility that is appropriate] for a bodhisattva who, even if he has not yet obtained receptivity to the nonproduction of dharmas, [since] the Buddha knows that because of his past and future karmic causes and conditions this bodhisattva will surely become a buddha, the Buddha [still] gives him a prediction in order to

<sup>5</sup> T. 1509, 597a24–b2. Note that in this treatise, “realizing the true character (or, nature) of dharmas” (知諸法實相) seems to be one step away from the attainment of receptivity to the nonproduction of dharmas: “Here [the bodhisattva] realizes the true character (\**bhūta-lakṣaṇa*) of dharmas and, because he understands it completely, namely, [it is about] ‘the faculty of understanding’ (\**ājñendriya*), from which he obtains receptivity to the nonproduction of dharmas (*anutpattikadharmakṣānti*) and abides in the irreversible *bhūmi*” (此中知諸法實相, 了了故名知根。從是得無生法忍, 住阿鞞跋致地。 T. 1509, 235a13–15; here I consulted the interpretation and reconstruction in Lamotte 1944–1980, III: 1503). See also my previous notes in Chapter 4, n. 58, 62.

<sup>6</sup> Chn. 是般若波羅蜜有種種門, 有種種道。 T. 1509, 713b17. A similar claim can be found in the *Gaṇḍavyūha*, “they [i.e., bodhisattvas] comprehend those miracles of the Buddha that are as vast as an ocean through various kinds of conviction (*adhimukti*), various paths, various gateways, various methods, various entries, various conducts, various approaches, various directions, various vessels (*bhājana*), various places, various world realms, various spiritual realizations (*adhigama*), various kinds of provisions (*sambhāra*), various miracles, various skillful means, and various concentrations” (Skt. *nānādhimuktibhir nānāpathair nānādvāirair nānāpraveśair nānāvātāirair nānānayair nānānugamair nānādigbhir nānābhājanair nānādeśair nānālokaḥ nānādhigamair nānāsaṃbhāirair nānāvīkurvitair nānopāyair nānāsamādhibhis tān buddhavikurvitāsamudrān avatāranti* / Suzuki and Idzumi 1949, 36.19–22).

benefit other people. With a body that is still subject to birth and death (\**cyutyupapadamāṃsakāya* or \**saṃsāramāṃsakāya*), this bodhisattva has not yet cut off his fetters, [but] he is the foremost among all the ordinary people (\**prthagjana*), and he too should be designated as having the characteristics of irreversibility. If he obtains receptivity to the nonproduction of dharmas and cuts off all his fetters, he will then be purified. [When] his last flesh-and-blood body (\**paścima māṃsakāya*) perishes, he will obtain a body of the element of dharmas, he will not be restricted by the fetters, and he will no longer need instruction. He will be like a boat on the great Ganges River that needs no [external] guide or controls and arrives at the ocean by itself.<sup>7</sup>

Yet another passage (**Passage III**) in this encyclopedia-like exegesis, when explaining irreversibility, again concerns itself with the correlation between irreversibility, receptivity to the nonproduction of dharmas, and prediction:

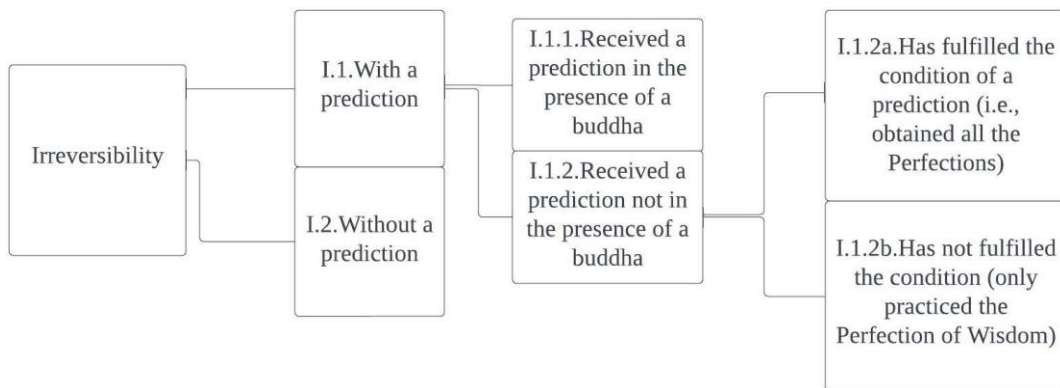
Even though this bodhisattva has been designated as irreversible from his first production of the thought of enlightenment, since he has not yet fully [exhibited] the characteristics of irreversibility, [the Buddha] did not give him a prediction. Why? [For] saints that are adherents of other religions, deities, minor bodhisattvas, and the like [would] think to themselves as follows: “What accomplishments does the Buddha see in this person such that he gives him a prediction? This person has

<sup>7</sup> Chn. 問曰：若阿鞞跋致相，得無生法忍，云何以淺心作諸不善？答曰：有二種阿鞞跋致：一者，得無生忍法；二者，雖未得無生忍法，佛知其過去未來所作因緣，必得作佛，為利益傍人故，為其授記。是菩薩生死\*肉身，結使未斷，於諸凡夫中，為最第一，是亦名阿鞞跋致相。若得無生忍法，斷諸結使，此則清淨。末後肉身盡，得法性生身，結使所不礙，不須教誡：如大^恒河中船，不須將御，自^至大海。T. 1509, 263c20–29; var. 得] Sx, Cn 當；肉] Fs. 完；恒河] Sx, Cn. 河。I have also consulted Lamotte’s translation (1944–1980, IV: 1804–1806) and adopted some of his Sanskrit reconstructions. The exact connotation of “a body of the element of dharmas” (法性生身) and related terms like “*dharmakāya*” is a subject of long debate (see, for example, Harrison 1992b). It is noteworthy that Lamotte reconstructs the phrase 法性生身 as \**dharmadhātuja-kāya*, a word that never appears in extant Sanskrit works (Zhao 2018, 138). Although I generally take Lamotte’s interpretation and reconstruction of Sanskrit as trustworthy, as has been pointed out by Robinson (1965–1966, 152), Lamotte seldom gives the sources of his reconstructions and his choices of Sanskrit can be sometimes arbitrary—“The sources for Lamotte’s Sanskrit reconstructions are not indicated together with the parenthetical terms, and are only sometimes given in the footnotes. They appear to come chiefly from the *Mahāvīyūtpatti*, but often they do not, and particularly when the restitution is doubtful one wants to know how Lamotte arrived at it.” In addition, as the Sanskrit text of the *Vimālakīrti-nirdeśa* was discovered long after the publication of Lamotte’s translation of this text, in which he also provided numerous Sanskrit reconstructions, a comparison between his reconstructions of Sanskrit terms and the actual Sanskrit text shows that only roughly two-thirds of his reconstructions agree with the correspondent Sanskrit (Harrison and Lopez 2022, xxv, n. 15). Most recently, Zhao (2018, 138–142) made an extensive examination of the term 法性生身 in the *DZDL*. According to his survey, the text seems consistent in terms of its association between the obtainment of *anūpattikadharma-kṣānti* and that of the *dharmakāya*. Zhao concludes that, “the omnipresent Buddha body, \**dharmadhātuja-kāya* of the *DZDL*, refers to the bodies of both the Buddha and bodhisattva, and is regarded as belonging to a special sphere (*viśaya*), the sphere of dharma (*dharmadhātu*), where these Buddhas and bodhisattvas dwell. However, this sphere is neither separated from the phenomenal world, nor is it identical with it” (ibid., 456). Despite the fact that Zhao’s “cosmological” interpretation of this term (ibid.) provides a way of understanding it, the exact meaning of this term here remains unclear to me. I tentatively translate it more literally as “a body of the nature/element of dharmas”; cf. in the *Suvarṇabhāṣottama*, “the body of the Law (*dharmakāya*) is the one fully enlightened; the element of dharma (*dharmadhātu*) is the Tathāgata. Such is the Lord’s body; such the exposition of the Law” (Radich 2012, 268).

not stood firm in the causes and conditions of the buddha path; why [should] the Buddha give him a prediction?" Therefore, the Buddha does not give him a prediction.

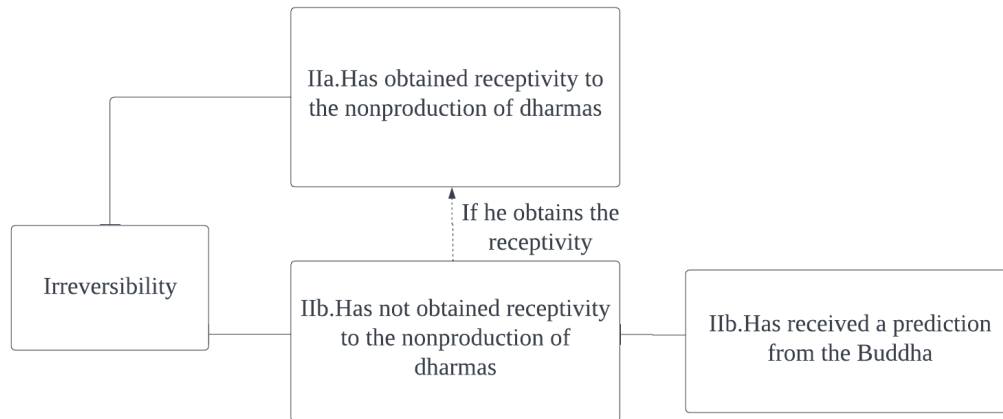
There are [a further] two classes of these [irreversible] bodhisattvas: first, a bodhisattva has a flesh-and-blood body that is subject to birth and death; second, a bodhisattva has a body of the element of dharmas. [A bodhisattva with a body of the element of dharmas is someone who has] attained receptivity of the nonproduction of dharmas and cut off his afflictions; after this [final] body, this bodhisattva will obtain a body of the element of dharmas. Again, there are two classes of irreversible bodhisattvas who are endowed with a flesh-and-blood body: those who obtain their prediction in the presence of a buddha; and those who obtain their prediction without being in the presence of a buddha. If a bodhisattva obtains receptivity to the nonproduction of dharmas during a time when there is no buddha, [this means he attains] prediction without being in the presence of a buddha.<sup>8</sup>

The distinctions between all the “irreversible” bodhisattvas appear quite confusing. To clarify the situation, below are the structures of the different types of irreversibility that can be inferred from the above three passages.

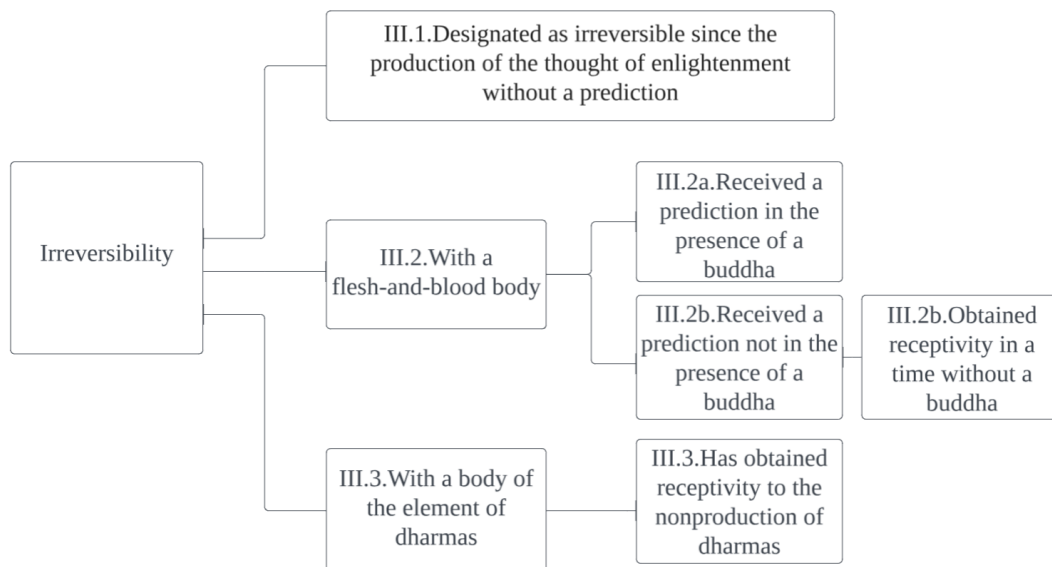


Structure Chart I (Passage I)

<sup>8</sup> Chn. 是菩薩雖從初發心以來名阿鞞跋致，阿鞞跋致相未具足故，不與授記。何以故？外道聖人、諸天、小菩薩等作此念：「佛見是人有何等事而與授記？是人於佛道因緣中未住，云何與授記？」是故佛未與授記。是菩薩有二種：一者、生死肉身，二者、法性生身：得無生忍法，斷諸煩惱，是身後，得法性生身。肉身阿鞞跋致亦有二種：有於佛前得授記；有不於佛前授記——若佛不在世時，得無生法忍，是不於佛前授記；T. 1509, 580a9–19. I have also consulted Gilks’s partial translations (2010, 61) of this passage.



Structure Chart II (Passage II)



Structure Chart III (Passage III)

The categories listed above present some obvious overlaps, but also some puzzling contradictions. Let us first examine the contradictions. The first major problem is that in Passage III, it is unclear how category III.1, in which a bodhisattva is “designated as irreversible from his first production of the thought of enlightenment,” relates to III.2, in which a bodhisattva is “with a flesh-and-blood body” and III.3, in which a bodhisattva is “with a body of the element of dharma.” As the bodhisattva in III.1 has not acquired a prediction but the bodhisattva in III.2 has, these two categories do not appear to overlap. Thus, should we equate the bodhisattvas in III.1 with those in III.3? The problem is that a bodhisattva in III.1 apparently belongs to a low developmental stage (i.e., not long after he generates his thought of enlightenment), while someone who has acquired receptivity to the nonproduction of dharma should be a highly

accomplished bodhisattva. Regarding this paradox, Lamotte (1998, 185–186, n. 209) concludes that the *Prajñāpāramitā* literature “distinguishes two kinds of *avaivartika*: 1. an *avaivartika* incorrectly so called, from the time of entering the *bhūmi*; 2. an *avaivartika* correctly so called, starting with the eighth *bhūmi*. Hence, the term leads to confusion and only the context allows us to decide which kind of *avaivartika* we are dealing with.”<sup>9</sup> Without attaching labels like “correct” or “incorrect” to *avaivartika*, it is true that from this passage alone, as Lamotte concludes, it is impossible to reconcile the type of *avaivartika* in III.1 with those in III.2 and III.3.

The second issue is that, in Passage I, the text does not elaborate on category I.2— “[irreversibility that is proper] for someone who has not yet obtained a prediction.” As in type III.1 of passage III, it could refer to either a bodhisattva who is “designated as irreversible from his first production of the thought of enlightenment” but has not yet received a prediction, or someone who becomes an irreversible bodhisattva because of the attainment of receptivity to the nonproduction of dharmas. Likewise, regarding Passage II, although we know for certain that someone who has obtained a prediction but not receptivity (Type II.2) could eventually arrive at irreversibility, it is ambiguous whether a prediction has also been granted to someone who has attained irreversibility through the obtainment of receptivity (i.e., Type II.1).<sup>10</sup>

In other words, we cannot ascertain whether prediction and receptivity to the nonproduction of dharmas are two alternatives for becoming an irreversible bodhisattva in the three above passages.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Sawazaki (2022, 46–48) has provided quite a comprehensive summary of this issue and the relevant scholarship. He further divides what Lamotte designates as “correct *avaivartika*” (irreversible bodhisattvas of higher developmental stages) into two categories, which, according to him, are acquired at the same time, but with nuanced connotations: a stage that is similar to an irreversible saint (聖者の不堕と同様の段階) and a stage beyond śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas (声聞辟支仏地を過ぎる段階) (ibid., 48–51). Based mainly on Lamotte’s opinion, Apple (2011a, 122–124) also adds some further comments on the nuanced meaning of this term and a few examples from the “Indian and Tibetan scholastic understandings of the classification based on commentarial exegesis of the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra*.” In his attempt to make sense of the two seemingly contradictory understandings of irreversibility, Gilks (2010, 289) distinguishes *avaivartika* from *avaivartika-bhūmi*, arguing that “the origin of the distinction between bodhisattvas who were *avaivartika* and those who stood on the *avaivartikabhūmi* has been identified as the formulation in the *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā* of a two-phase version of the path—the first corresponding [to] the career of the *śrāvaka* and *pratyekabuddha*, and the second which was a phase beyond those two levels. Positing entrance into the second phase as equivalent to attaining the irreversible *bhūmi* created a contradiction that it seems could only be resolved by separating the meanings of *avaivartika* and *avaivartika-bhūmi*, for if bodhisattvas were not already *avaivartika* (in the sense described in the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā*) before reaching the *avaivartika-bhūmi*, they would have actualised *nirvāṇa* midway (*āntara* [sic]), and never arrived there.” Even if Gilks’s claim is correct—the question is too complicated to be fully explored here—this conclusion cannot be drawn from the passage in question (i.e., Passage III) for this passage never refers to the concept of “*avaivartika-bhūmi*.”

<sup>10</sup> Moreover, in the case of bodhisattvas in category II.2, the text claims that, “If he obtains receptivity to the nonproduction of dharmas [...] he will obtain a body of the element of dharmas;” it is unclear if we should take the “if” (Chn. 若) literally, so that for a bodhisattva who has received a prediction, obtaining receptivity is an optional condition; alternatively, the “if” could also indicate “when.” If we accept the latter explanation, for a bodhisattva who has received a prediction, obtaining the receptivity is then in fact inevitable.

<sup>11</sup> It is hard to say whether prediction and the obtainment of receptivity are both required for irreversibility here (though there is no fixed sequence of which leads to which), or if they are rather alternatives (i.e., a bodhisattva only needs to fulfill one of them to become irreversible). In the *DZDL*, prediction appears mostly side by side with receptivity to the nonproduction of dharmas. Most sources concerning predictions, receptivity to the nonproduction of dharmas, and irreversibility focus on their associations instead of their exact relationship (e.g., Harrison 1993,

The two issues are difficult to resolve solely with the given materials. Besides finding a better interpretation, I suggest looking at which features the three classifications share.

The most obvious commonality here is that each chart explains the conditions for attaining irreversibility as alternative paths. If we convert the structure charts to flowcharts, the endpoint of each chart would be “irreversibility.” According to Passage I, bodhisattvas get to the destination (irreversibility) with or without a prediction: the prediction may be in the presence of a buddha or not, and further, to obtain a prediction without being in the presence of a buddha, he may or may not have fulfilled all the six Perfections. Passage II, the less complicated passage, suggests that an irreversible bodhisattva should preferably have attained receptivity to the nonproduction of dharmas, but alternatively, a bodhisattva who has gained a prediction will also eventually arrive there. Passage III appears similar to Passage II, as the essential distinction between various irreversible bodhisattvas is whether this bodhisattva has obtained the receptivity in question. This passage further clarifies that when no buddha is present, obtaining receptivity to the nonproduction of dharmas equals obtaining a prediction from a buddha.<sup>12</sup>

Putting these pieces together, we should remain cautious, as these explanations are not necessarily coherent and the text remains ambiguous about the exact relationship between prediction and receptivity to the nonproduction of dharmas. Nonetheless, on the whole, the text invariably recognizes more than one path to irreversibility, and effectively equates the attainment of receptivity with prediction when it comes to irreversibility.

This is significant because, aside from confirming our hypothesis that some Mahāyāna scriptures acknowledge slightly varied ways to get to buddhahood, by prioritizing receptivity to the nonproduction of dharmas, this commentary in fact downplays the importance of prediction without denying it.

This dynamic between receptivity to the nonproduction of dharmas and prediction in terms of a bodhisattva’s progress to enlightenment will be the topic of our next section.

171; Tournier 2019, 103–104). I cannot find other convincing evidence to confirm or rule out whether prediction and the receptivity in question can be alternative ways to achieve irreversibility.

<sup>12</sup> The *DZDL* indicates that there is another kind of prediction that could be obtained when no buddha is present: bodhisattvas may be predicted to attain buddhahood by deities who have learned about the bodhisattva path from past buddhas. “Question: [Since] deities have not obtained omniscience (*\*sarvajñatā*), how can they give bodhisattvas predictions? Answer: Deities are long-lived. They learned from past buddhas that such conduct gains [a bodhisattva] a prediction. Now, because they see a bodhisattva behave like this (i.e., like those bodhisattvas who had been predicted to attain buddhahood), they announce it [that this bodhisattva will become a buddha]. This is because they know the fruit [just] by observing the causes. Deities see that this bodhisattva practices the marks of the three gates of liberation (*\*trīṇi vimokṣa-mukhāni*) and harbors a mind of compassion toward beings; that is why they say, ‘[You] will become a buddha soon.’” Chn. 問曰：諸天未得一切智，云何能與菩薩授記？答曰：諸天長壽，從過去諸佛聞如是行得記，今見菩薩有如是行故說。見因知有果故。諸天見是菩薩行三解脫門印，亦兼行慈悲心於眾生，是故說言「不久作佛」。T. 1509, 614c20–24.

## Internalization of External Influences

As extensively discussed, one issue inherent in the schemes of bodhisattva developmental stages is the externality of the two key factors on the bodhisattva path, namely, the involvement of buddhas (through prophecy and protection) and Māra (through various forms of interference). Such externality hinders bodhisattvas from taking complete control over their progress and determining their own status. Therefore, such externality would provoke bodhisattvas' uncertainty over their careers as bodhisattvas. To counter this uncertainty, one natural solution is to internalize these factors, to bring them under control and make them controllable by active self-cultivation. However, since the belief in the externality of prediction and Māra's interference is deep-rooted, rather than claiming that influence from buddhas and Māra has become entirely internal—or, as some modern scholars have claimed, psychological—what we will see in the following analysis are the tensions between taking prediction and Māra as external and the attempts to internalize them.

Again, the connotations of prediction and Māra's deeds do not remain unchanging and are often intertwined with other doctrinal questions.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, what I seek to do is only to provide examples of how the treatment of those external factors would reflect a conscious resolution of the uncertainty concerning the bodhisattva career.

### Prediction

The previous section ended with our observation from the *DZDL* that the importance of prediction to a bodhisattva's enlightenment is de-emphasized; instead, the necessity of the attainment of receptivity to the nonproduction of dharmas is highlighted. Is this phenomenon only limited to this commentary on the *LP*, or can we observe such a trend from a broader range of materials?

As previous scholars have already pointed out, from the *Daoxing banre jing*—one of the earliest pieces of evidence for the *Prajñāpāramitā* literature—we can discern the dynamic between the three “milestones” of a bodhisattva's progress: prediction, receptivity, and irreversibility. According to Shichi's (1990, 44–50) observation, “[b]ecoming an irreversible bodhisattva becomes synonymous with receiving a prediction to Buddhahood prior to chapter 19 in the *Daoxing jing*” (Apple 2011a, 127).

<sup>13</sup> For example, famously, in the *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa*, Māra is depicted as “a bodhisattva himself, albeit undercover, playing a role as the Evil One in a truly impressive display of skillful means” (Nichols 2019, 122). In the *Lotus Sūtra*, “in a description of a time under a future Buddha, there is the vision of a land without pollution, adorned with jeweled trees, where ‘there will be no deeds of Māra, and, though Māra's people will be there, they will all defend the Buddha-dharma’” (ibid.). Prediction with a slightly different connotation can be found in the *Lotus Sūtra*. In this text, “Sadāparibhūta's bodhisattva activity of unfailingly addressing them with the words, ‘In the future you are to become enlightened tathāgatas,’ is the activity of 授記, the prophecies of enlightenment that were originally the prerogative of a tathāgata, but in the *Lotus Sūtra* were extended to bodhisattvas as well” (Ishida 2023, 185–186).

However, from Chapter 19 on, several pieces of evidence show that the “new concept” of receptivity to the nonproduction of dharmas gains prominence in the later part of this text and becomes closely associated with prediction, while the other concept—irreversibility—may be absent (Shichi 1990, 51–53). Although the conclusion here is not without its problems,<sup>14</sup> and Shichi’s focus is on the dynamic between irreversibility and receptivity to the nonproduction of dharmas, I wish to follow this lead and trace the dynamic between prediction and the obtainment of receptivity.

If it holds true that the models of the bodhisattva path largely developed from the life stories of the Buddha, we should first examine the position of prophecy in terms of the Bodhisattva’s career. Although we have previously discussed the necessity of prediction, we have not yet explored how prediction is related to other attainments, like receptivity to the nonproduction of dharmas.

First of all, the Buddha’s biographies which are most relevant to this study, i.e., the ones that mention the ten *bhūmis*—namely, the *Xiuxing benqi jing* 修行本起經, the *Taizi ruiying benqi jing* 太子瑞應本起經, and the *Guoqu xianzai yin’guo jing* 過去現在因果經—all follow the same formula:<sup>15</sup> The Bodhisattva first met Dīpaṃkara, made his offering, and received a prediction from Dīpaṃkara. Immediately after the prediction, the Bodhisattva attained receptivity to the nonproduction of dharmas and rose to the sky.<sup>16</sup> Having returned to earth, the Bodhisattva worshiped Dīpaṃkara again and continued his Bodhisattva practice until his final rebirth.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>14</sup> The conclusion that prediction in the first eighteen chapters is associated with irreversibility is too generalized. For example, in Chapter 11, there is already an indication of what Shichi refers to as “prediction associated with receptivity to the nonproduction of dharmas:” “When the Buddha preached this sūtra [...] thirty bodhisattvas all attained the delight [i.e., *kṣānti*; see Karashima 2011, 274, n. 201] of the nonproduction of dharmas; they should all receive a prediction in the Bhadra *kalpa*” (Chn. 佛說是經時[...]三十菩薩皆逮得無所從生法樂, 皆當於是婆羅劫中受決. T. 224, 451a12–15). For parallels and a partial translation, see Karashima 2011, 273–274. According to Karashima (ibid., 273, n. 200), in terms of the number of such bodhisattvas, instead of “thirty,” other versions of the *Aṣṭa* read either “twenty” (e.g., the extant Sanskrit version and the Chinese translations attributed to Zhi Qian and Kumārajīva) or “twenty thousand” (e.g., the Tibetan translation and the first *fen* of Xuanzang’s translations). In this passage, prediction is only associated with the Buddha’s teaching and the receptivity gained from the teaching. Following Shichi’s logic, this passage should also be considered as indicative of the rising importance of *anupattikadharmas-kṣānti*, and therefore contradicts his argument that the first eighteen chapters are more concerned with irreversibility than receptivity. Admittedly, this is a rather minor problem, but it again showcases the complexity of the textual layers of the *Aṣṭa*; we should always be cautious when generalizing any ideas presented in this text.

<sup>15</sup> According to Matsumura (2011a, 64–65), the Dīpaṃkara story in the first two texts share a similar origin, while the other text, *Guoqu xianzai yinguo jing*, is closer to the *Divyāvadāna* as far as the prediction story is concerned.

<sup>16</sup> See T. 184, 462b25, T. 185, 473a24–25, and T. 189, 622b29, respectively.

<sup>17</sup> See T. 184, 463a19–26, T. 185, 473b12–15, and T. 189, 623a24–28, respectively. While the accounts of the attainment and practices following the prediction vary slightly, these texts all agree that after the Bodhisattva had accumulated enough merit, became learned in the buddhas’ teachings, and fulfilled all *bhūmis*, he became a bodhisattva who was “limited to only one more birth” (Chn. 一生補處). While the *Xiuxing benqi jing* specifies the six Perfections as the virtues the Bodhisattva practiced after receiving the prediction (T. 184, 463a22–23); the specific mention of the Perfections in the *Xiuxing benqi jing* makes Shizutani [1974, 82] suspect the text was compiled after the *Aṣṭa*, the other two only vaguely say he “is accomplished in both merit and practices” (T. 185, 473b12; T. 189, 623a24). Only then did the Bodhisattva observe from the Tuṣita heaven that the conditions would be favorable for him to be reborn as Śākyamuni Buddha and teach the Dharma (for a comparison of the Tuṣita episodes in different versions of the Buddha’s life story, see Luczanits 2010). Similar formulas, except for the mention of the ten *bhūmis*, can be found in a great variety of materials; see Fujimura 1973, 43–44.

In these texts, the prediction from Dīpaṃkara is the absolute prerequisite for becoming Buddha, and it happens many *kalpas* before accomplishing all ten bodhisattva *bhūmis*.<sup>18</sup> All three texts place the attainment of receptivity to the nonproduction of dharmas directly after the prediction. We can infer from these depictions of the Bodhisattva's career that prediction is considered the essential prerequisite for becoming a buddha and receptivity to the nonproduction of dharmas is subordinate to the prediction.

Although there are issues in taking the above texts as representative of the early development of the concept of ten bodhisattva *bhūmis*,<sup>19</sup> the conclusion—namely that in the early developmental phase of the notion of the bodhisattva career, a prediction, rather than receptivity to the nonproduction of dharmas, is the determinant of irreversibility and subsequent buddhahood—is supported by a variety of evidence.

First, when recounting the story of Dīpaṃkara's prediction, a number of texts affiliated with Mainstream schools mention only prediction as a prerequisite for future buddhahood; neither receptivity toward the nonproduction of dharmas nor irreversibility<sup>20</sup> appears in these texts at all: e.g., the Dharmaguptaka Vinaya,<sup>21</sup> the Dharmaguptaka *Dharmapada*,<sup>22</sup> and the Mūlasarvāstivādin *Divyāvadāna*.<sup>23</sup> In terms of the more generalized bodhisattva path, there are also multiple Mahāyāna sūtras that refer only to prediction, but not to *anupattikadharmakṣānti* or any similar notions; for example, the *Akṣobhyavyūha* (Shizutani 1974, 113),<sup>24</sup> the *Qinü jing* 七女經, T. 556 (ibid., 160),<sup>25</sup> the *Fanzhinü shouyi jing* 梵志女首意經, T. 567 (ibid., 176),<sup>26</sup> etc. Based on both the date of their Chinese translations and their doctrinal features, Shizutani (ibid., 42–43) argues that these texts are likely to belong to a preliminary

<sup>18</sup> According to the *Xiuxing benqi jing*, it was three great *asaṃkhyeya-kalpas* (T. 184, 463a19); in the *Taizi ruiying benqi jing*, the duration of time was 91 *kalpas* (T. 185, 473b12).

<sup>19</sup> This issue has been discussed previously; see also Hirakawa 1989a, 552.

<sup>20</sup> It is worth mentioning that the notion of *anupattikadharmakṣānti* is absent in the *Mahāvastu* (Tournier 2017, 272, n. 66). In addition, even though the *Mahāvastu* mentions the concept “irreversible” (e.g., Skt. *vivartanā nāsti*, Sernart 1882–1897, II: 356.1; Skt. *anivartīya*, ibid., I: 105.16) and places it in the eighth *bhūmi*, the text makes no explicit association between prediction and irreversibility. It only implies that both are qualities of high-level bodhisattvas (Tournier 2017, 217–218).

<sup>21</sup> That is, the *Sifen lü* 四分律. For the prediction in question, see T. 1428, 785b23–29.

<sup>22</sup> According to the citation of the Dharmaguptaka *Dharmapada* in Bhāviveka's *The Flame of Reason* (Skt. *Tarkajvālā*)—the autocommentary on his famous work, the *Heart of the Middle Way* (Skt. *Madhyamaka-hṛdaya-kārikā*)—“when Dīpaṃkara predicted my [future awakening], I attained the eighth stage [*\*aṣṭamaka*; Tib. *sa brgyad pa*; i.e., becoming a saint; for the connotation of this word, see Lamotte 1998, 216–221, n. 299; see also my n. 88 later in this chapter] and the ten masteries [*\*daśabala*; Tib. *dbang bcu*]. When they heard this prediction directly from the Lord of the world, the world with its gods reverently paid homage to me. When the Buddha stepped with his feet on the locks of my hair, the world with its gods paid homage to me as one who is worthy of homage” (Eckel 2008, 172; for the Tibetan text, see ibid., 354.4–9).

<sup>23</sup> For the Sanskrit text of the prediction and immediate circumstances, see Cowell and Neil 1886, 252.10–20.

<sup>24</sup> That is, the *Achufo guo jing* 阿闍佛國經, T. 313; For the prediction in question in Lokakṣema's translation of this well-known text, see T. 313, 753b10–15.

<sup>25</sup> Although the text is attributed to Zhi Qian, this attribution is disputable. See <https://dazangthings.nz/cbc/text/611/> for the textual history and parallel versions of this text. For the prediction in question, see T. 909a14–21. This text only associates irreversibility with this prediction (ibid., 909a23).

<sup>26</sup> For the description of prediction, see T. 567, 940c5–18.

phase of the development of Mahāyāna,<sup>27</sup> for he believes that the concept of *anutpattikadharma-kṣānti* should be traced to the *SP*, and that the Mahāyāna sūtras where this concept is missing possibly predate the *SP*. Given the complexity of the dating of Mahāyāna scriptures and the multiple possibilities for interpreting the absence of *anutpattikadharma-kṣānti* in these sūtras,<sup>28</sup> we cannot completely accept Shizutani's theory. Therefore, I suggest we look at the next type of materials—materials that include both predictions and receptivity to the nonproduction of dharmas—and see how the two concepts correlate with each other.

Previously, we have reviewed three versions of the Buddha's life story that mention ten bodhisattva *bhūmis*, and in those versions of the Dīpaṃkara story, receptivity to the nonproduction of dharmas is gained after the prediction. In more proper "Mahāyāna" sūtras, we also frequently encounter this story, and the concept *anutpattikadharma-kṣānti* appears to become a staple part of the Dīpaṃkara story in Mahāyāna sūtras. Next, we wish to examine how this concept is embedded into these sūtras.

First, just like the three biographies of the Buddha's life story that we have reviewed, a number of texts place receptivity to the nonproduction of dharmas as immediately after, or at least simultaneous with, the prediction. For example, in the *Bodhisattvapiṭaka*, the Buddha explains, "Śāriputra, as soon as I received the prediction, I realized receptivity to the nonproduction of dharmas."<sup>29</sup> Similar accounts can be

<sup>27</sup> Shizutani (1974, 39ff) divides the "early Mahāyāna" further into a "primitive stage" (i.e., 原始大乘) and an "early stage" (i.e., 初期大乘). He argues that the *SP* marks a watershed in the development of early Mahāyāna (ibid., 47) and lists several new doctrinal developments that, according to him, could betray the composition date of Mahāyāna sūtras (ibid., 42ff), including *anutpattikadharma-kṣānti*, Mahāyāna/Hīnayāna, *ekayāna*, *dhāraṇī*, etc.

<sup>28</sup> As Nattier (2003, 69) has pointed out, "There are at least three possible explanations for an author's silence on a particular idea or practice: (1) the item in question was too well known to require explicit mention and was simply assumed as background; (2) the item was completely unknown to the writer, either because it developed at a later time or because it was unknown in his particular locale; and finally, (3) the author was quite familiar with the item in question, but considered it so unacceptable, or so foreign to his understanding of Buddhism, as to be unworthy of his attention. It is also possible, of course, that the author knew of the item in question but simply considered it uninteresting." Therefore, in the case of the absence of *anutpattikadharma-kṣānti* in the above texts, we do not know if the sūtra's silence on it suggests that they predate the emergence of this concept.

<sup>29</sup> "Śāriputra, as soon as I received the prediction, I realized (*\*sākṣātkṛta*) receptivity to the nonproduction of dharmas. Śāriputra, what receptivity to the nonproduction of dharmas did I realize? That is, I realized receptivity to [the fact that] all dharmas concerning matter (*\*rūpa*) cannot be grasped; I realized receptivity to [the fact that] all dharmas concerning feelings (*\*vedanā*), conceptualization (*\*saṃjñā*), conditioning (*\*saṃskāra*), and awareness (*\*vijñāna*) cannot be grasped; I realized receptivity to [the fact that] all dharmas included in the aggregates, realms, and fields (*\*skandha-dhātu-āyatana*) cannot be grasped." Chn. 舍利子，當授記時，我便證得無生法忍。舍利子，證得何等無生法忍？所謂證得一切色法無所得忍，證得受想行識法無所得忍，證得蘊界處法無所得忍。T. 310 (12), 319b4–8. This interpretation of the story of Dīpaṃkara's prediction is placed at the end of the *Bodhisattvapiṭaka*; according to Pagel (1995, 95), "This stratagem [i.e., placing the prediction story at the end of the work] not only brings the series of *jātaka* stories to its logical conclusion, but asserts the viability of the whole enterprise in an incontestable way."

found in the *\*Mahāprātihārya-nirdeśa* (*Dashenbian hui* 大神變會, T. 310 [22])—another text from the MRK collection<sup>30</sup>—the *Samghāṭa-sūtra*,<sup>31</sup> etc.<sup>32</sup>

Secondly, besides the above texts that suggest the prediction comes first, one important text—the *Daoxing banre jing*—indicates that the prediction was given to the Bodhisattva *after* he realized receptivity to the nonproduction of dharmas: “the Buddha said, ‘just when I scattered five flowers on Dīpaṃkara, I immediately obtained the delight [i.e., *kṣānti*] of the nonproduction of dharmas and became steadfast in it. [Then, Dīpaṃkara] gave me the prediction that ‘after immeasurable *kalpas* in the future, you will definitely become Buddha Śākyamuni.’”<sup>33</sup> This earliest available translation of the *Aṣṭa* explicitly posits the Bodhisattva’s attainment of receptivity before the prediction. A highly similar narrative can also be found in Dharmarakṣa’s translation of the *Ajātaśatru-kaukr̥tya-vinodana*.<sup>34</sup> We also frequently encounter a slightly varied treatment of the correlation between prediction and receptivity to the nonproduction of dharmas in regard to the Dīpaṃkara story: without mentioning details like the

<sup>30</sup> “The Buddha said to the deities: ‘Just so! Just so! [The causes and conditions of the prediction are] just as you have said. When I [became able to] comprehend those practices in the past, the Blessed One, Dīpaṃkara, gave me a prophecy. At that moment, I obtained receptivity to the nonproduction of dharmas. This is called the extremely great miracle of the Tathāgata. Only those who have been long accomplished in pure conduct can cultivate these bodhisattva practices.’” Chn. 佛告天子:「如是如是,如汝所言。我昔得此行時,然燈世尊與我授記。我時獲得無生法忍,是名如來最大神變。若久成就清淨業者,乃能修習此菩薩行。」T. 310 (22), 500a15–18.

<sup>31</sup> “Then, Tathāgata Dīpaṃkara gave me a prediction: ‘Young Brahmin! In the future, after immeasurable *kalpas*, you will become a worthy and perfectly enlightened tathāgata, Śākyamuni by name.’ Then, Sarvaśūra, after I [rose up and] stood twelve *tālas* high in the air, I obtained receptivity to the nonproduction of dharmas. Sarvaśūra, after that, I observed pure conduct for immeasurable *kalpas*.” Skt. *sa ca mā[m] dīpaṃkaras tathāgato vyākārṣīd bhaviṣyasi tvam māṇavakānāgate [']dhvany asaṃkhyeyaiḥ kalpaiḥ śākyamunir nāma tathāgato [']rhan samyaksambuddha iti. tato [']ham sarvaśūra dvādaśatālamātraṃ viḥāya samantarīkṣe sthītvanutpattikadharmakṣāntim pratilabdhavān yac ca me sarvaśūrāsaṃkhyeṣu kalpeṣu brahmācāryaṃ cīrṇam.* von Hinüber, 2021, 57 §133–134 (Ms C); see also *ibid.*, 57 §133–134 (Ms F), which shows no substantial difference. See also *ibid.*, lxxiii–lxxiv for a summarization of the prediction story included in this sūtra. For the corresponding Chinese, see T. 423, 966b4–8. A similar account of this story is found in an independent Tibetan text of the story of Dīpaṃkara’s prediction, i.e., the *‘phags pa Mar me mdzad kyis lung bstan pa zhes bya ba theg pa chen po ‘i mdo*, D188; see Matsumura 2011b, 134–135.

<sup>32</sup> For example, in the alternative translation of the thirty-sixth work of the MRK collection, the *\*Susthitamatidevaputra-pariprcchā* (*Sheng shanzhuyi tianzi suowen jing* 聖善住意天子所問經); see T. 341, 125c1–5, attributed to *\*Vimokṣaprajñārṣi* 毘目智仙 and *\*Prajñāruci* 般若流支 (for the attribution of this text, see <https://dazangthings.nz/cbc/text/1271>). Another example is from the *Shangzhu tianzi suowen jing* 商主天子所問經; see T. 591, 122c18–22.

<sup>33</sup> Chn. 佛言:「如我持五華散提和竭羅佛上,即逮得無所從生法樂於中立,授我決言:『却後無數劫,若當為釋迦文佛。』」T. 224, 458b3–6. For parallels, see Karashima 2011, 341–342. The corresponding Sanskrit, though more elaborated, also places receptivity before the prediction; see Wogihara 1932–1935, II: 747.17–748.1.

<sup>34</sup> That is, the *Wenshuzhili puchao sanmei jing* 文殊支利普超三昧經, T. 627. “Long ago, in the past, during the time of Dīpaṃkara Buddha, in that era, I received a prediction. [I] spread my hair out on the ground [so that] Tathāgata Dīpaṃkara stepped on my hair. When I scattered lotus flowers over [Dīpaṃkara], I attained receptivity to [the nonproduction of] dharmas. [Dīpaṃkara then] gave me a prediction by saying, ‘After immeasurable *kalpas* in the future, you will definitely become a buddha by the name Tathāgata Śākyamuni.’” Chn. 乃昔往古,錠光佛時,吾於彼世而受得決。所敷髮地,錠光如來蹈越髮上。散以蓮花,逮得法忍。授吾莢曰:『後無數劫當得作佛,號能仁如來!』T. 627, 426c19–22. Note that while other complete Chinese and Tibetan translations of the *Ajātaśatru-kaukr̥tya-vinodana* also include the Dīpaṃkara story, they make no reference to *anutpattikadharmakṣānti* when narrating the story. For the history of this translation, see Miyazaki 2012, 6–13. Miyazaki (*ibid.*, 83–85) also uses the concept *anutpattikadharmakṣānti* to separate the newer and older layers of this work (which means, in principle, that he agrees with Shizutani that *anutpattikadharmakṣānti* belongs to a slightly later stratum of the development of the Mahāyāna doctrine; see *ibid.*, 76, n. 50). However, since his discussion focuses on the overlap between the versions, he does not refer to this passage. In addition, an almost identical account of the story can be found in the *\*Mahākaruṇāpūṇḍarika-sūtra* or *Dabei jing* 大悲經; see T. 380, 962a8–12.

Bodhisattva scattering flowers or spreading his hair out on the ground, such texts claim that as soon as the Bodhisattva met Dīpaṃkara, he obtained receptivity to the nonproduction of dharmas, after which Dīpaṃkara gave the Bodhisattva a prediction.<sup>35</sup> While the first group of texts centers on the offering to Dīpaṃkara, the second group of texts only emphasizes seeing Dīpaṃkara; yet they all place the attainment of receptivity to the nonproduction of dharmas before the prediction but after the encounter with Dīpaṃkara, thus meeting with Dīpaṃkara is still the premise of both attainments.<sup>36</sup>

Having seen the accounts concerning these two important attainments within the context of the stories of *the* Bodhisattva, we may wonder what it is like for *a* bodhisattva. Are they supposed to first obtain a prediction? Or should they first strive for the attainment of receptivity? Is it necessary to meet a previous buddha for either attainment?

Again, starting from the *Daoxing banre jing*, the text describes the final steps of the bodhisattva path several times. Chapter 19 reads, “the Buddha said to Subhūti, ‘This bodhisattva *mahāsattva* would obtain delight [i.e., receptivity] to the nonproduction of dharmas. When he is endowed with such delight, he will be predicted to attain unsurpassable and perfect enlightenment.’”<sup>37</sup> An early Gāndhārī manuscript (ca. first two centuries CE; Strauch 2010, 26)—Bajaur Collection 2—also promises bodhisattvas prediction to buddhahood after they gain receptivity to dharmas (*dharmakṣānti*) (ibid., 42, 50).<sup>38</sup>

Although not without exception,<sup>39</sup> when prescribing the bodhisattva path, the overwhelming majority of Mahāyāna sūtras use a rather formulaic expression that

<sup>35</sup> For example, at the end of Dharmarakṣa’s translation of the *Bhadrakalpika-sūtra*, see T. 425, 65b14–17 (no exact parallel of this passage can be found in the Tibetan translation, i.e., (*phags pa*) *bsKal pa bzang po pa zhes bya ba theg pa chen po’i mdo*, D94). Similarly, we find rather condensed narrations of the same event in two texts that were translated by Kumārajīva, namely the *Fozang jing* (佛藏經, T. 653, 797c29–798a4; for a summary of this passage, see Tournier 2017, 140. Tournier has also noted that this passage parallels the *Mahāvastu*, but the latter does not mention the concept of *anupattikadharmakṣānti*; see ibid., 218) and the *\*Viśeṣacintibrahma-paripṛcchā* (the *Siyi fantian suowen jing* 思益梵天所問經, T. 586, 46a22–24, as well as in an alternative translation, the *Shengsiwei fantian suowen jing* 勝思惟梵天所問經, tr. Bodhiruci, T. 587, 78a13–16).

<sup>36</sup> It is worth mentioning that the *Lalitavistara*’s treatment of the relationship between *anupattikadharmakṣānti* and *vyākaraṇa* is quite peculiar. When recounting the story of Dīpaṃkara, the text never juxtaposes the two concepts. In Chapter 13, it only mentions receptivity to the nonproduction of dharmas (lit. “highest receptivity”): “as soon as I saw Dīpaṃkara, I obtained the highest receptivity” (Skt. *dīpaṃkare ti dṛṣṭamātri labdha kṣānti uttamā*; Hokazono 1994, 630.1–2 §13.65). In Chapter 2 and Chapter 26 of the same text, however, only prediction is brought up (ibid., 288.17–18 §2.1; Hokazono 2019b, 410.14–15 §26.27). However, in Chapter 4 of the extant Sanskrit version, when the Buddha preaches about the generic bodhisattva path, he specifies that “receptivity to the nonproduction of dharmas is the entrance to the light of the Dharma, which facilitates the attainment of prediction” (Skt. *anupattikadharmakṣānti [sic] dharmāloka mukhaṃ vyākaraṇapratilambhāya saṃvartate*; Hokazono 1994, 336.12–13).

<sup>37</sup> Chn. 佛語須菩提：「是菩薩摩訶薩達無所從生法樂，如是樂悉具足{無所從生}，受決阿耨多羅三耶三菩。」 T. 224, 463a22–24. I have adopted the modification suggested by Karashima (2011, 393); according to him, 無所從生 appears to be a later interpolation (ibid., 393, n. 469). This sentence is retained in the later versions, for example, in the extant Sanskrit version (Wogihara 1932–1935, II: 799.1–5).

<sup>38</sup> As I have discussed above (n. 14), this manuscript does not explicitly refer to the concept *anupattikadharmakṣānti*. According to Strauch (2010, 43), “It is possible that the concept of *dharmakṣānti* as represented in the Gāndhārī sūtra was not explicitly based on the non-originating character of the factors of existence but perceived in a more general way.”

<sup>39</sup> According to my preliminary survey, the exceptions are rather rare. In the *SZPPSL*, the bodhisattva path is depicted as follows: “If a bodhisattva receives a prediction of unsurpassable and perfect enlightenment, enters the

indicates that prediction follows the attainment of receptivity. This formula is also seen in another text that we have repeatedly discussed, the *Śūraṃgamasamādhi-sūtra*, which describes the preferred bodhisattva career development as follows: “When he has acquired the *anutpattikadharmakṣānti*, the Buddhas predict to him (*\*vyākurvanti*) [that he will reach supreme and perfect enlightenment (*\*anuttarāṃ samyaksambodhiṃ abhisambhotsyate*)]” (Lamotte 1998, 145 §48.3). Similar statements prevail in important Mahāyāna literature, such as in the *LB*<sup>40</sup> and the *MRK*.<sup>41</sup>

Finally, just as important as the absence of the *anutpattikadharmakṣānti* doctrine in certain versions of the bodhisattva path, the absence of prediction is also noteworthy. To be sure, it is very rare to find this key event missing in any sūtra concerning the bodhisattva career.<sup>42</sup> Prediction is always integral to Mahāyāna scriptures, either as a promise that the Buddha gives to the audience of a sūtra or as a milestone in the general depiction of the bodhisattva path. Still, the importance of this notion varies. Most importantly, this key notion appears only twice in the *Dbh*, and both times it is worded in a very vague way: the first instance says that a bodhisattva on the eighth *bhūmi* is “a recipient of immeasurable predictions;”<sup>43</sup> the second instance appears in the discourse

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state of certainty (法位, Skt. *\*niyāma*), and acquires receptivity to the nonproduction of dharmas, [even] a thousand or ten thousand or hundred thousand of armies of Māra cannot violate or disturb [him]” (Chn. 若菩薩得阿耨多羅三藐三菩提記, 入法位, 得無生法忍。千萬億數魔之軍眾不能壞亂。T. 1521, 26c5–7). Note that this description of the bodhisattva path is quite different from that of the sūtra being commented on, the *Dbh*; see also my note below, n. 72. Instead, an extremely similar description of the path can be found in the *DZDL* (T. 1509, 383b20–23). Another slightly distinct account, found at the end of the *\*Lokadhara-pariprecchā*, is more concerned with providing alternative paths to buddhahood: “If this person has not yet obtained receptivity to the nonproduction of dharmas, I will give him a prophecy that he will become the second or the third buddha in the future and will definitely obtain receptivity to the nonproduction of dharmas. If he has obtained receptivity to the nonproduction of dharmas, he will quickly be endowed with the majestic power among all dharmas. He will quickly obtain the pure land of buddhas. He will quickly have a retinue consisting of countless *śrāvakas*. He will quickly have a retinue of an immeasurable number of bodhisattvas” (Chn. 若是人未得無生法忍, 我與受記, 於當來世第二第三佛, 當得無生法忍。已得無生法忍, 於一切法中疾得自在力, 疾得淨佛國土, 疾得無量聲聞眾, 疾得無量菩薩眾。Chishi jing 持世經, tr. Kumārajīva, T. 482, 666a18–22; for the corresponding passage in Dharmarakṣa’s translation, see T. 481, 641b20–24. There also exists a Tibetan translation that is confirmed to be a translation of Kumārajīva’s Chinese version; see Silk 2019, 234).

<sup>40</sup> E.g., in the *Ratnolka-dhāraṇī* of this collection, the upper ladder of the bodhisattva career is depicted as follows: “when [a bodhisattva] arrives at the *bhūmi* of irreversibility, he will acquire profound receptivity to the nonproduction of dharmas. If he acquires profound receptivity to the nonproduction of dharmas, he will be predicted [to attain buddhahood] by various buddhas. If he receives the prediction from various buddhas, all buddhas will appear before him” (Chn. 得至於不退地, 則得無生深法忍。若得無生深法忍, 則為諸佛所授記。若為諸佛所授記, 則一切佛現其前。T. 279 [12], 73a25–28, tr. Śikṣānanda; for the translation by Buddhahadra, see T. 434a4–7).

<sup>41</sup> There are at least three instances of the formula of “first attaining *anutpattikadharmakṣānti*, then prediction follows” in the *MRK* collection. For example, in the second section, i.e., the *\*Anantamukhapariśodhana-nirdeśa*, that is, the *Wubian zhuangyan hui* 無邊莊嚴會, “if someone could apprehend and enter this Dharma gate, you should know that he is already abiding on the *bhūmi* of bodhisattvas; he could realize receptivity to the nonproduction of dharmas quickly, and he will definitely receive a prediction of enlightenment soon” (Chn. 若有於此法門能悟入者, 應知彼已住菩薩地, 能速疾證無生法忍, 不久當得授菩提記。T. 310 [2], 30b11–13). For other instances, see T. 310 (8), 148a21–23 and T. 310 (7), 130b1–6.

<sup>42</sup> As I have noted, prediction is not found in the *SB*.

<sup>43</sup> “He becomes the recipient of immeasurable predictions” (Chun 1993, 411; Skt. *apramāṇavyākaraṇapratyeṣaka*, Kondō 1936, 145.1). Note that Honda (1968, 230) understands the *vyākaraṇa* here as “exposition,” whereas most Chinese and Tibetan translators explicitly render it as “prediction” (Chn. 受記; Tib. *lung bstan pa*; T. 278, 566a10; T. 285, 484a8; T. 286, 522b28; T. 287, 561c9; D. 44, *phal chen, kha* 246b6). Since the association between prediction and the eighth *bhūmi* is widely acknowledged (cf. in the *Śūraṃgamasamādhi-sūtra*; Lamotte 1998, 145–146), I tend

on the tenth *bhūmi*, which claims a bodhisattva understands “the secret of predictions [that are given] to bodhisattvas.”<sup>44</sup> On the other hand, the *Dbh* offers a clear plan of the gradual obtainment of *anutpattikadharma-kṣānti*: “[when] a bodhisattva reaches the sixth bodhisattva *bhūmi*—the *bhūmi* of ‘being face to face’ (*abhimukhī*), [although he is endowed with] sharpness [of his faculty] and receptivity that conforms [to the dharma], he has not [gone] so far to the extent that he reaches the entrance of receptivity to the nonproduction of dharmas.”<sup>45</sup> On the seventh *bhūmi*, as the acts of a bodhisattva should have become signless (*animitta*), the bodhisattva should be “illuminated by fully purified receptivity to the nonproduction of dharmas.”<sup>46</sup> Finally, on the eighth *bhūmi*, a bodhisattva would “have obtained receptivity to the nonproduction of dharmas.”<sup>47</sup> Such emphasis on receptivity to the nonproduction of dharmas compared to prediction is not unique to the *Dbh*. As argued by Shizutani (1974, 352), the newer textual layers in the *Lotus Sūtra* also reflect the increasing importance of the concept of *anutpattikadharma-kṣānti*.

The above survey of the dynamic between receptivity to the nonproduction of dharmas and prediction shows that, despite the common understanding that “the acquisition of the non-arising of the factors of existence [*anutpattikadharma-kṣānti*] coincides with the definite prediction (*vyākaraṇa*) of the bodhisattva to Buddhahood” (Pagel 1995, 187, n. 315),<sup>48</sup> we see subtle changes in the relationship between the two that show

to understand the *vyākaraṇa* here as “prediction.” The explanation offered by the *Daśabhūmi-vyākhyāna* is also ambiguous; for the passage in question, see T. 1522, 185a22–26.

<sup>44</sup> “He understands all the true nature which are the immeasurable and uncountable secret matters of tathāgatas with such [listed] items as foremost, [including] the secret of predictions [that are given] to bodhisattvas” (Skt. *bodhisattvavyākaraṇaguhyam* [...] *evampramukhāny aprameyāsamkhyeyāni tathāgatānāṃ guhyasthānāni tāni sarvāṇi yathābhūtaṃ prajānāti* / Kondō 1936, 185.18, 186.6–7). Again, Honda (1968, 265) understands *vyākaraṇa* in the sense of “exposition” or “elucidation,” but the Chinese and Tibetan translations invariably understand it as “prediction” (e.g., T. 286, 529b25–26; T. 287, 569a6; D. 44, *phal chen, kha* 266a7). Dharmarakṣa’s translation, however, reads differently from all other available versions. This translation appears to involve some interpolation of commentaries and is itself quite hard to understand. My tentative translation is as follows: “when a bodhisattva receives his prediction, his grace will flow into all beings, and [he will] save and embrace [攝; cf. 攝濟, Karashima 1998, 386] them” (Chn. 菩薩受決, 恩流眾生, 而救攝之. T. 285, 491b5–6). The *Daśabhūmi-vyākhyāna* does not explain the phrase in question.

<sup>45</sup> Skt. *ṣaṣṭhīm abhimukhīm bodhisattvabhūmim anuprāpnoti / tīkṣṇayānulomikyā kṣāntiyā na ca tāvad anutpattikadharmakṣāntimukham anuprāpnoti* / Kondō 1936, 96.13; see also Chun 1993, 310–311 and Honda 1968, 187 for their English renditions. For the explanation of the name of this *bhūmi*—*abhimukhī*—according to the *Dbh* itself and the *Daśabhūmi-vyākhyāna*, see Itō 2013, 215–216.

<sup>46</sup> Skt. *suviśodhitam anutpattikadharmakṣāntiyavabhāṣitam* / Kondō 1936, 121.9–10; see also Saerji (2020, 356.13–14) for his Sanskrit edition of the seventh *bhūmi* based on two old Nepalese manuscripts published by Matsuda in 1996. For English translations of this passage, see Chun 1993, 365 and Honda 1968, 206. Note that Buddhahadra’s Chinese translation interprets the sentence as if this bodhisattva has obtained this receptivity at this stage (T. 278, 562b2–3), although it is possible that the manuscripts Buddhahadra followed indeed read in this way, it is more logical to accept the readings of the extant Sanskrit version that the bodhisattva has not yet fully obtained *anutpattikadharma-kṣānti* on the seventh *bhūmi*. The compound here is difficult to interpret, and the extant Chinese and Tibetan versions show significant disagreement in the rendition of these two words; For this reason, here I provide my tentative translation based on my understanding of the context.

<sup>47</sup> Skt. *anutpattikadharmakṣāntiprāpta*. Kondō 1936, 134.12.

<sup>48</sup> Pagel (1995, 187, n. 315) also gives several examples to support his conclusion. I would point out that despite him using the following passage in the *Lotus Sūtra* as an example, it only says that the Buddha makes two different promises to the audience. The coincidence of receptivity and prediction cannot be inferred from this passage: “Three thousand beings from the assemblies surrounding the Blessed One, Śākyamuni, obtained receptivity toward the

some patterns. First, the doctrinal and historical primacy of prediction is undeniable, while the notion of *anutpattikadharma-kṣānti* appears to have developed later. Therefore, when narrating the Bodhisattva's encounter with the previous buddha Dīpaṃkara, a prediction from Dīpaṃkara is always present, whereas the attainment of receptivity is sometimes absent. Secondly, after the concept of *anutpattikadharma-kṣānti* becomes widely accepted and integral to the bodhisattva path, the correlation between this and prediction still varies in different scriptures. In terms of the career of *the* Bodhisattva, while some texts claim that the prediction led to receptivity, many say the acquisition of receptivity took place before the prediction, but both require meeting a previous buddha as a precondition. Nonetheless, concerning the generic bodhisattva path, most scriptures place the acquisition of receptivity to the nonproduction of dharmas before a prediction of buddhahood, and meeting a buddha is not a precondition for both attainments.<sup>49</sup> Here, we face the problem that, admittedly, we cannot say for certain if the above sequences of attainments should be taken at face value.<sup>50</sup> Also, considering the complexity of the textual history of Buddhist literature in general, the different accounts of the Dīpaṃkara story and of the bodhisattva path must have depended on their transmission history and school affiliations to some extent. However, since the sequence of attainments does make certain matters explicit,<sup>51</sup> I believe we can indeed discern a pattern from the given materials: prediction has become less important in terms of a bodhisattva's progress and, in a way, even becomes subordinate to receptivity to the nonproduction of dharmas.

The demotion of prediction is significant for our research, as “prediction is the one element of the bodhisattva path which must come from someone else (i.e., a Buddha)” (Fronsdal 1998, 202). The external nature of the attainment of prediction—one essential

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nonproduction of dharmas. Three hundred thousand beings obtained the prediction to unsurpassable, perfect enlightenment” (Skt. *bhagavataś ca śākyamuneḥ parśanmaṇḍalānāṃ trayāṇāṃ prāṇisahasrāṇāṃ anutpattikadharmakṣāntipratilābho 'bhūt / trayāṇāṃ ca prāṇisatasahasrāṇāṃ anuttarāyāṃ samyaksambodhau vyākaraṇapratilābho 'bhūt* // Kern and Nanjio 1912, 265.12–266.2; see also Kern 1884, 254 for an English rendition). Note that, in the above passage, more people obtained predictions than did receptivity.

<sup>49</sup> For example, in the plan outlined in the *Śūraṃgamasamādhi-sūtra*, the specification of meeting buddhas is placed in the eighth *bhūmi* (i.e., after the acquisition of both receptivity and prediction) by means of “[c]oncentration consisting of always being placed facing the Buddhas of the present (*pratyutpanna-buddhasammukhāvasthitasamādhi*)” (Lamotte 1989, 146 §48.4). Moreover, “[h]aving obtained the Concentration consisting of always being placed facing the Buddhas of the present, he is never deprived of the sight of the Buddhas” (ibid.). The concept of *pratyutpanna-samādhi* is far too complicated to be fully explored here but the nature of meeting buddhas through concentration is certainly different from the “mythological” meeting with past buddhas described in Jātaka/Avadānas. Here, I only wish to stress that in such passages, actually meeting past buddhas (unlike meeting them in concentration) is not explicitly a precondition for the attainment of *anutpattikadharma-kṣānti*. For discussions on the concept of *pratyutpanna-samādhi*, see ibid., 146–147, n.121; Harrison 1978, 42–46; Harrison 2003, 117–122. For its relationship with irreversibility as described in the *DZDL*, see Sawazaki 2022, 75–79.

<sup>50</sup> For example, in the above-cited *Anantamukhapariśodhana-nirdeśa*, “if someone could apprehend and enter this Dharma gate, you should know that he is already residing in the bodhisattva *bhūmi*s; he could comprehend receptivity to the nonproduction of dharmas quickly and he will definitely receive a prediction of enlightenment soon.” (T. 310 [2], 30b11–13). It does not specify whether the attainment of receptivity happens before prediction.

<sup>51</sup> For instance, in the *Aṣṭa*, “Subhūti, a bodhisattva *mahāsattva* who is accomplished in such receptivity will be predicted to attain unsurpassable and perfect enlightenment” (Skt. *evamrupayā ca Subhūte kṣāntiṃ samanvāgato bodhisattvo mahāsattvo vyākriyate 'nuttarāyāṃ samyaksambodhau* / Wogihara 1932–1935, II: 799.4–5).

inherent problem of the bodhisattva path—leads to deep anxiety and uncertainty about the prospect of the bodhisattva career. The attainment of receptivity to the nonproduction of dharmas, on the other hand, relies largely, or even completely, on one’s self-cultivation. Although this attainment is still challenging and advanced for bodhisattvas, it is rooted in gradual training through intentional practice.<sup>52</sup> Compared to the notion of prediction, setting this achievement as a goal brings more hope to bodhisattvas who aspire to become a buddha, especially in a buddhaless time. Since some texts even explicitly promise bodhisattvas their prediction after their attainment of *anutpattikadharma-kṣānti*, a bodhisattva should therefore not worry about their future or past prediction, seek no sign of it, and simply concentrate on their own mental cultivation so that they will eventually receive the prediction. Accordingly, the increasing importance of *anutpattikadharma-kṣānti* reflects attempts to resolve anxiety over external influences by making the event of prediction more a result of self-reliant practices.

## Māra

Besides prediction, another source of uncertainty among bodhisattvas caused by external influence is the interference of Māra. The uncertainty over obstruction caused by Māra appears to have been one of the greatest concerns among early followers of the bodhisattva path. For example, according to Sengrui 僧叡, “The *hu* [i.e., Indic] text [of the Larger *Prajñāpāramitā*] only had titles for the introductory chapter, for the ‘Non-retrogression’ chapter, and the ‘Māra’ chapter. As for the other chapters, the [*hu* text] only gave the chapter numbers” (Felbur 2018, 217–218).<sup>53</sup> This arrangement seems to single out Māra and irreversibility as the two foremost topics in this scripture. In a sense, irreversibility is “a response to the need for certainty” (Gilks 2010, 292), whereas Māra deals with one major source of obstructive forces that brings uncertainty. Here again we see the significance of the issue of certainty vs. uncertainty.<sup>54</sup>

However, compared to the treatment of prediction as seen above, the pattern of the development of the concept of Māra seems less clear. As has been discussed, while this concept certainly underwent significant doctrinal changes, the existence of Māra is still

<sup>52</sup> For his extensive discussion on this concept, see Lamotte 1998, 143–145, n. 119.

<sup>53</sup> This citation is from Sengrui’s preface of Kumārajīva’s translation of the *LP*; for the Chinese text as included in the *Chu sanzang ji ji*, see Felbur 2018, 217 as well as T. 2145, 53b16–17. See also Felbur’s footnote (2018, 218, n. 92) for a careful examination concerning the chapter titles in the later editions of Kumārajīva’s translation of the *LP*.

<sup>54</sup> The *LP* once explicitly equates the accomplishment of irreversibility with freedom from the deeds of Māra. For example, the following is taught: “O Subhūti, you should know the characteristics of irreversibility of an irreversible bodhisattva *mahāsattva* [as being] accomplished in these dispositions, marks, and signs: an irreversible bodhisattva *mahāsattva* who is accomplished in these dispositions, marks, and signs cannot be dissuaded by evil Māra from [attaining] unsurpassable and perfect enlightenment” (Skt. *ebhir api Subhūte ākārair ebhir līṅgair ebhir nimittaiḥ samanvāgatasyāvinivartanīyasya bodhisattvasya mahāsattvasyāvinivartanīyalakṣaṇaṃ veditavyaṃ, yair ākārair yair līṅgair yair nimittaiḥ samanvāgato ’vinivartanīyo bodhisattvo mahāsattvo māreṇa pāpīyasā na śakyate vivecayitum anuttarāyāḥ samyak sambodheḥ*. Kimura 1986–2009, IV: 154.23–27).

considered primarily external to bodhisattvas, and the definition and depiction of the character of Māra are quite loose and flexible.<sup>55</sup> Considering this problem, our examination of the internalization of Māra will be less detailed. Still, it is noticeable that the abstract connotation of Māra becomes more pronounced compared to the mythological or personified existence of Māra.

As we have seen in the *Aṣṭa*, immediately after the passages on dreams that we have so extensively discussed in Chapter 4, the text goes on to speak of various deeds of Māra: Māra “may appear, either mentally or by actually assuming the form and disguise of someone else, in order to induce the bodhisattva into thinking that he has been predicted for Buddhahood” (Nichols 2019, 109–110).<sup>56</sup> Here, the personified aspect of Māra is highlighted. The analytical notion of four *māras*, however, clearly shows a tendency to incorporate the abstract notion of evil into the concept of Māra. Such an abstract notion of Māra—perhaps it is more accurate to use the uncapitalized *māra*—is especially exemplified in the *Dbh*. Among the instances where *māra* is mentioned, it is either juxtaposed with afflictions by the fixed expression *māra-kleśa*,<sup>57</sup> or appears in the formulation of four *māras*.<sup>58</sup> Even though the text mentions the famous anthropomorphized Māra, Namuci, several times, just as *māra* above, it is invariably used in a symbolized sense.<sup>59</sup> Finally, it is important to note that besides (or rather than) functioning as a manual that provides prescriptions for progressing on the bodhisattva path, the *Dbh* offers a cosmic path that connects the world of ordinary people and the world of buddhas.<sup>60</sup> Its treatment of the concept of *māra* also reflects this specific stress

<sup>55</sup> According to Clark (1994, 134–145), who has examined the depiction of Māra in several Mahāyāna texts, “Each of these texts develops the themes of Māra, psychopathology and evil in ways that reflect the special concerns of the Mahāyāna. Basic differences between the Mahāyāna and the Hīnayāna, such as the Bodhisattva ideal versus the Arhat ideal, are often expressed as being related to the machinations of Māra. The mythology of Māra in this way is brought into the polemics of Buddhist sectarianism. In addition to this, Mahāyāna views of the psychological significance of Māra will be seen in points of doctrine and practice emphasized in these texts [...] Each of the Mahāyāna texts presented in this chapter sets its own priorities and strategies for this task of overcoming Māra.”

<sup>56</sup> See Karashima 2011, 359–377 for the text in the *Daoxing banre jing* and parallel versions. The concept and deeds of Māra in the *Prajñāpāramitā* literature (especially the *Aṣṭa*) have been sufficiently examined in Clark 1994, 135–155 and Nichols 2019, 106–118.

<sup>57</sup> For example, on the fourth *bhūmi*, “Just like this, sons of the Conqueror, surely, a bodhisattva who is abiding in this bodhisattva *bhūmi*—the [*bhūmi* of] ‘radiance’—becomes so unstoppable that [his] knowledge cannot be snatched away by bodhisattvas abiding in other lower *bhūmis* and by all [kinds of] behaviors of evil and defilement” (Skt. *evam eva bhavaṃto jinaputrā bodhisattvo ’syāsyām arciṣmatyām bodhisattvabhūmau sthitaḥ sann asaṃhāryo bhavati / tad anyair adharabhūmisthitair bodhisattvaiḥ anācchedyajñānaś ca bhavati sarvamāra-kleśasamudācāraiḥ* / Kondō 1936, 73.15–17; see also Honda 1968, 170). Similarly, on the sixth *bhūmi*, a bodhisattva “cannot be held back by all [kinds of] behaviors of evil and defilement” (Skt. *asaṃhāryaś ca bhavati sarvamāra-kleśasamudācāraiḥ* / Kondō 1936, 103.16–17; see also Chun 1993, 335 and Honda 1968, 194).

<sup>58</sup> E.g., on the sixth *bhūmi*, a bodhisattva “cannot be held back by the domains of four *māras*” (Skt. *asaṃhāryāṇi ca bhavanti caturbhīr mārāvacaraiḥ* / Kondō 1936, 105.9).

<sup>59</sup> For example, according to this sūtra, living beings are “bound by Namuci’s fetters” (Skt. *namucipāśabaddhā*, *ibid.*, 43.12) or “inside of the cage of Namuci” (Skt. *namucipaṃjaramadhya*, *ibid.*, 49.8).

<sup>60</sup> This has already been hinted at by previous scholars such as Nattier and Newton. To cite Nattier’s observation on the *SB* (2007, 12), “The bodhisattva path as understood in the smaller *Buddhāvataṃsaka*, in sum, involves seeing (and serving) a vast number of Buddhas in life after life, as one gradually acquires the qualities that will lead to becoming a Buddha oneself. It is an emphatically gradual path – there is no sudden enlightenment here, much less an inherent ‘buddha-nature’—but it is also a cosmic drama set in a universe filled with buddha-fields. The bodhisattva has earthly teachers, to be sure, but he is also a performer on a vast stage, observing and being observed by the Buddhas of the ten directions. The drama culminates, in its final stages, with his progression from prince to

on cosmology: there are several cases in which the text concerns itself neither with the personified Māra nor the abstract concept of *māra*, but with the places where *māras* dwell. For example, depicting the glorious state a bodhisattva on the tenth *bhūmi* is in, the text claims, “having emitted [light] in the ten directions, having lit up and [then] blocked all dwellings of Māra out, having lit up bodhisattvas who have reached the Consecration-*bhūmi*,<sup>61</sup> [the light from this tenth-*bhūmi* bodhisattva’s *ūrṇa*] enter their [i.e., other bodhisattvas’] bodies.”<sup>62</sup>

This cursory survey of the notion of Māra shows that, even though we cannot and should not claim that Māra is understood *only* in a psychological or mental sense in later Mahāyāna scriptures, nonetheless, concerning the works on the stages of bodhisattva progress, the aspect of Māra as a malicious deity that obstructs bodhisattvas from attaining enlightenment appears to be de-emphasized.

## Eliminating Curiosity

As reiterated several times in this dissertation, the belief in prediction, as the key event that assures a bodhisattva of their future buddhahood, leads to two major problems: since a prediction relies on the authority of a buddha and more or less depends on his activities in past lives, a bodhisattva on the path may feel that his progress is uncontrollable and unknowable. In the above sections, I have illustrated how, to reduce the uncertainty over the prospects of a bodhisattva’s career, the texts recognize more than one path to buddhahood and attach growing importance to self-cultivation in terms of a bodhisattva’s progress. These two directions for the development of the bodhisattva doctrines guarantee bodhisattvas that they will eventually get to their destination as long as they keep practicing in a correct manner. But they still fail to answer one essential question bodhisattvas may have: how to determine and verify their progress?

As stated in Chapter 5, the question of revealing or confirming spiritual progress entails several problems, especially the difficulties posed by the need for an authoritative figure to examine one’s progress and by verification of visionary signs

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their apparent to consecration as a king;” the *Dbh* has also apparently inherited this cosmic view of the bodhisattva path. Newton (2020, 846), on the other hand, highlights “the manner by which the visual assists in giving understanding and definition to conceptual domains, and how these significant images are combined to present novel framings, as well as how visual displays could be acting as important arguments for the validity of doctrinal content [of the *Dbh*].” In Chun’s study of the *Dbh*, although he never explicitly concludes that the text depicts a cosmic path to buddhahood, he nonetheless implies as much. For example, when talking about the vows of the bodhisattva: “The vows of bodhisattva at the first stage [are] directly related to the original vows of the Buddha as we have shown in the above that the bodhisattva enters into the meditation by the original vows and powers of the Buddha. This mechanism is like a candle light which is transmitted to another candle without losing its original nature. In the resonant phenomena between the bodhisattva’s vows and the original vows of the Buddha, the bodhisattva realizes that his/her thoughts and activities are not simply from oneself but from the realm of the Buddha” (Chun 1993, 49).

<sup>61</sup> Skt. *abhiṣekabhūmi*, a epithet of the tenth *bhūmi*, cf. Kondō 1936, 178.15–179.1.

<sup>62</sup> Skt. *nīścārya daśasū dikṣu sarvamārabhavanāny avabhāsyā dhyāmikṛtyābhiṣekabhūmiprāptān bodhisattvān avabhāsyā tatkāyeṣv evāstaṃgacchanti* / *ibid.*, 1936, 181.8–9; see also Honda 1968, 261.

that are generated from personal experience. In addition to these problems, which are somewhat intrinsic to the Buddhist belief of determining one's spiritual progress, we must bear in mind that as the bodhisattva doctrine develops, "new" bodhisattva doctrines create further problems for revealing or confirming a bodhisattva's progress. In the previous two sections, the texts under examination cover a large time span, from the *SP* to the *Dbh*; while breaking them down into parts, we have seen their concrete ways of resolving uncertainty, but what we did not touch upon is that, at the same time, new doctrinal developments further complicate the issue which may take bodhisattvas farther away from revealing and knowing their condition.

Firstly, as I have reasoned in Chapter 5, the premise of divining one's spiritual progress by signs like dreams is the correlation between what the signs indicate and what spiritual progress relies on. In the case of dreams, they can only divine spiritual progress when the progress is primarily determined by karma and external influences. However, given the gradual internalization of external influences, it is questionable whether signs can still indicate a bodhisattva's progress; this will be brought up again in the next section.

Secondly, another key doctrinal development is the growing emphasis on emptiness, nonattachment, etc. To be sure, early sūtras such as the *Aṣṭa* are already particularly concerned with these doctrines, and for practical reasons, I cannot base my hypothesis on a comprehensive survey of the development of these doctrines. As we will see, however, several texts explicitly suggest that bodhisattvas with the correct understanding of emptiness should not bother with their progress; otherwise, they will fall into the trap of grasping at things—including one's own spiritual attainment.

Perhaps to solve, or rather avoid, these issues of determining one's spiritual progress, some scriptures state that bodhisattvas should not concern themselves with the knowledge of their status at all.

As we have previously cited, the *Pañca* specifically asks the bodhisattva to "not think and reflect about (his) *bhūmis* of dharmas; he [should] practice the preparations (*parikarman*) without seeing (*samanupaśyati*) the *bhūmis*."<sup>63</sup> The text does not give the exact reason for this statement, but right above this sentence, in answering the question Subhūti had—"how does a bodhisattva *mahāsattva* set out on the great vehicle?"<sup>64</sup>—the Blessed One explains, "Subhūti, as for that, a bodhisattva *mahāsattva* who practices according to the six Perfections passes (*saṃkrāmati*) from [one] *bhūmi* to [another] *bhūmi*. O Subhūti, how does a bodhisattva *mahāsattva* pass from [one] *bhūmi* to [another] *bhūmi*? Namely (*yad uta*), (he passes) by the means of the non-passage (*asaṃkrāntyā*) of all dharmas. Why? Because dharmas neither come nor go,

<sup>63</sup> Skt. *api tu yā dharmāṇāṃ bhūmis tan na manyate na cintayati bhūmi-parikarma ca karoti na ca bhūmiṃ samanupaśyati*. Kimura 1986–2009, I-2: 88.5–7.

<sup>64</sup> Skt. *kathaṃ bodhisattvo mahāsattvo mahāyānasamprasthito bhavatīti*. *ibid.*, I: 87.31–88.1

neither pass nor approach.”<sup>65</sup> Though this statement can barely be seen as a direct explanation of why a bodhisattva is not supposed to reflect on the bodhisattva *bhūmis*, we may infer from this teaching on the empty nature of dharmas that bodhisattvas should not get attached to (i.e., in terms of knowledge, be curious about) any kind of dharma, which certainly includes their progress. Indeed, regarding this, the *DZDL* comments that bodhisattvas, riding the great vehicle, having comprehended the nature of dharmas (so that they do not have attachment to them, including the *bhūmis*), “yet by the mind of great compassion, by the Perfection of Exertion, and by the power of skillful means, [bodhisattvas] still cultivate various good dharmas and further seek higher *bhūmis*. They do not seize the signs of *bhūmis* (\**na bhūmi-nimittāny udgrhṇāti*) nor see these *bhūmis*.”<sup>66</sup> In other words, bodhisattvas strive to stand on a higher *bhūmi* through their great virtues and their will to save other beings, not for their own self-importance as advanced bodhisattvas.

While the *LP* particularly claims that a bodhisattva should not reflect on the bodhisattva *bhūmis*, many other scriptures emphasize that a bodhisattva should not verify or reflect on one particular achievement, that is, prediction.

As we have seen in the *Śūraṃgamasamādhi-sūtra* and the *DZDL*, several texts make it clear that some predictions are inherently unbeknownst to the ones who receive them, perhaps for the same purpose of ridding bodhisattvas of their curiosity about this attainment. These texts only directly concern themselves with prediction. However, as we have seen in the above section, the attainment of prediction had been more and more closely associated with the profound insight about the nature of things, that is, receptivity to the nonproduction of dharmas. Then, the problem is, should a bodhisattva who has attained this receptivity even reflect on something like prediction? Indeed, in the *Sāgaramati-paripṛcchā*,<sup>67</sup> the Buddha teaches about his state of mind when he received the prediction from Dīpaṃkara: “At that time, I did not even hear the word ‘prediction,’ nor did I have the notion of [Dīpaṃkara] Buddha and the prediction. At that time, I [gained] the wisdom of the threefold purity: I did not have [lit. “see”] the

<sup>65</sup> Skt. *iha Subhūte bodhisattvo mahāsattvaḥ ṣaṣṭu pāramitāsu caran bhūmer bhūmiṃ saṃkrāmati, katham ca Subhūte bodhisattvo mahāsattvo bhūmer bhūmiṃ saṃkrāmati yad utāsaṃkrāntyā sarvadharmāṇām. tat kasya hetoḥ? na hi sa kaścid dharmo ya āgacchati vā gacchati vā saṃkrāmati vā upasaṃkrāmati vā* / *ibid.*, 1-2:88.1–5. See also Lamotte 1944–1980, V: 2382 for his French translation; note that the edition Lamotte bases on is Ghoṣa’s edition of the *Śatasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā* (for the passage in question, see Ghoṣa 1902–1914, 1454.1–6); as far as the chapter on the *bhūmis* is concerned, the readings of this edition are generally closer to the recension of the *LP* quoted in the *DZDL*.

<sup>66</sup> Chn. 又以大悲心故、精進波羅蜜故、方便力故、還修諸善法、更求勝地、而不取地相、亦不見此地。T. 1509, 411a19–22. I have consulted Lamotte’s rendition and his reconstruction of the Sanskrit (Lamotte 1944–1980, V: 2383).

<sup>67</sup> That is, the *Haihui pusa pin* 海慧菩薩品, the fifth text of the \**Mahāsaṃnipāta* collection (T. 397). For a brief summary of its literary history and its citations in Indian and Tibetan sources, see Skilling 2018, 440–443. The text only survives in multiple Chinese and Tibetan translations, but parts of its Sanskrit text were preserved in manuscripts (e.g., *ibid.*, 433–439) and in sūtra compilations like the *Śikṣ*. Regarding the latter, Saerji (2019, 213–264) has compiled a comprehensive list of the such citations of this text and their corresponding Chinese and Tibetan passages. As far as I am aware, no Sanskrit material of the passage in question is found.

notion of self, the thought of buddha, or the thought of prediction. [...] If someone views [dharma] as such, he has truly comprehended [lit. seen] prediction.”<sup>68</sup> The text clearly suggests that the Bodhisattva (as well as any bodhisattva who receives “true” predictions) did not reflect on the prediction because, at the same time that he received the prediction, he also comprehended the empty nature of dharma, including any kind of spiritual achievement. For this reason, it is only coherent that a bodhisattva does not conceptualize his attainment of prediction.

In sum, the scriptures we have examined in this section all suggest that a bodhisattva should cultivate his virtues without reflecting on his attainment. This statement not only concurs with the doctrine of emptiness, but also, intentionally or unintentionally, dissuades bodhisattvas from looking into the confirmation of their achievement, especially prediction.

## Raising the Threshold for Bodhisattvas

Although it seems that the problems inherent in the bodhisattva path could be solved by simply ordering bodhisattvas not to seek signs of their attainment and only to focus on their self-cultivation, there are still underlying issues. The foremost issue is perhaps that, as long as people are *truly* pursuing this bodhisattva career, verifying their own status is not an unnecessary curiosity, but a necessity for further progress. To draw some real-life comparisons, a student of any subject must first determine his own level to find the suitable instruction and practice to follow; the role of a worker depends on the evaluation of his ability and experience, and only by fulfilling this role will he progress on his career ladder.

<sup>68</sup> The full passage reads, “At that time, I did not even hear the word ‘prediction,’ nor did I have the notion of [Dīpaṃkara] Buddha and the prediction. At that time, I [gained] the wisdom of the threefold purity: I did not have [lit. “see”] the notion of self, the notion of buddha, or the notion of prediction. [I gained] a further kind of threefold purity: I did not see self, beings, or the true Dharma. [I gained] a further kind of threefold purity: I did not see name (\**nāma*), matter (\**rūpa*), or cause (\**hetu*). [I gained] a further kind of threefold purity: I understood that aggregates (\**skandha*) all pervade aggregates of dharma; physical elements (\**dhātu*) all pervade elements of dharma; fields (\**āyatana*) all pervade fields of dharma. [I gained] a further kind of threefold purity: the past has disappeared; the future is not [yet] born; the present does not last. [I gained] a further kind of threefold purity: I viewed body as [perishable as] moon [reflected on the] water; I viewed sound as unutterable; I viewed mind as invisible. [I gained] a further kind of threefold purity: emptiness (\**śūnyatā*), signlessness (\**ānimitta*), and wishlessness (\**apraṇihita*). If someone views [dharma] in this way, he has truly comprehended [lit. seen] [the notion of] prediction.” Chn. 我於爾時都不聞是授記音聲，亦無佛想，及授記想；我於爾時三種淨慧：不見我想、不見佛想，及授記想。復有三淨：不見於我、不見眾生，及以正法。復有三淨：不見名、不見色、不見因。復有三淨：見一切陰悉入法陰、見一切界悉入法界、見一切入悉入法入。復有三淨：過去已盡、未來不生、現在不住。復有三淨：觀身如水月、觀聲不可說、觀心不可見。復有三淨：空無相願。若如是見，即是真實見於授記。T. 397 (5), 67a20–28. The term underlying “threefold purity” (Chn. 三淨) might be *tri-maṇḍala-pariśuddha* (lit. purity in three spheres), although this term more commonly appears in the context of donation, cf. the *Samādhirāja-sūtra* in which the term is explained as “no seeing of the Tathāgata, nor perception of Self, nor longing for the ripening of actions” (Chen and Loukota 2020, 216–217, n. 42); see also the term in the *Akṣayamati-nirdeśa*, Braavig 1993, II: 364, 442, etc.

To be sure, real-life analogies alone cannot be used as a valid argument. But first, we have indeed seen that knowledge of one's progress was a pronounced concern on a personal level. On a social level, we might imagine that a bodhisattva's spiritual status is also important for the community, especially when it comes to appointing individual bodhisattvas to the role of spiritual teacher or leader. Therefore, if the schemes of bodhisattva progression are meant to be followed, and they are meant to be taken as a standard for ranking bodhisattvas, how can they, in most cases, not only overlook the question of confirming one's progress,<sup>69</sup> but in fact deny the necessity of knowing it? Unless, that is, these schemes are not in fact designed to be followed at all—yet, curiously, texts such as the *SvN* were being produced to address this question.

Such a question has certainly already captured academic interest. Regarding the contrast between the “active concern” of “the question of one's specific level of attainment” that is typically found in earlier sūtras and the absence of this concern in later scriptures, Drewes makes the following statement:

The claim that Buddhists who believed in Mahāyāna sūtras were already advanced bodhisattvas, repeated throughout the early texts, going back to the earliest point for which we have evidence, represented a departure from this common heritage. It created a new sphere in which Buddhists who accepted these texts could identify as bodhisattvas, and accept one another's bodhisattva status, without needing to rely on speculation, divination, or uncertain future hopes. In the early stages, witnessed primarily by the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā*, the question of one's specific level of attainment seems to have been a matter of active concern, the primary issue being whether one had already received a prediction or was close to receiving one in the future. Soon, sūtras began to identify all of their followers as irreversible. (Drewes 2021, 171)

According to Drewes, the once-widespread concern of “one's specific level of attainment” was eased by convincing “Buddhists who believed in Mahāyāna sūtras” of being “already advanced bodhisattvas.” Indeed, if everyone has received a prediction, there is no more need to confirm this attainment. Moreover, inflation of a particular achievement seems common in Mahāyāna Buddhism: at the end of Chapter 4, we have seen a similar pattern concerning the obtainment of *jāṭismara*—accordingly, “a specialized attainment associated with a specific group and attainable through limited and specialized means has been transformed into a generalized ‘benefit’ open to all and available through a broad range of basic religious activities” (Schopen 2005, 208).

<sup>69</sup> It could certainly also be the case that a bodhisattva's developmental stage can be observed from his ability and virtues, but as we have discussed in the Introduction, the instructions in works like the *Dbh* are vague, and grading one's virtue and behavior according to such instructions is therefore not practical.

Schopen further notes that “whole series of basic religious concepts have been transformed in exactly the same way” (ibid., 209), which includes “the idea of rebirth in Sukhāvati” (ibid., 208), “the idea of *avaivartikatā* and the idea of the attainment of Buddhahood” (ibid., 209).<sup>70</sup>

The previous research cited above urges us to consider the possibility that the concepts we are mostly concerned with—prediction and related attainments—are also generalized in the later Mahāyāna tradition.<sup>71</sup> If we accept this hypothesis and attribute the absence of revelation or confirmation of a bodhisattva’s progress to the “democratization” of these “elitist” attainments—to use Schopen’s words (ibid., 209)—then later schemes of bodhisattva *bhūmis* can avoid the question of confirming such spiritual attainments because, in their concurrent ideas, these key bodhisattva attainments are easily achievable. Therefore, the audience is no longer concerned with signs of spiritual attainment, and the schemes of the bodhisattva path are only demonstrations of an ideal path to buddhahood; they are not intended for the audience to follow. Problem solved?

Truly, it seems that the development of many key bodhisattva doctrines falls into this pattern of generalization. Most evidently, the “Pure Land” concept of “easy practice” promises bodhisattvas obtainments of irreversibility and receptivity to the nonproduction of dharmas just by worshiping buddhas—an idea that is seen in one important commentary on the *Dbh*, the *SZPPSL*.<sup>72</sup> In addition, above I have cited

<sup>70</sup> Natier (2009, 99–100) comes to a similar conclusion regarding the irreversibility in the *Lotus Sūtra*: “the authors of the *Lotus* took the idea of ‘nonretrogression’ found in earlier Mahāyāna texts and subjected it to a sweeping act of democratization. No longer is the certainty of future Buddhahood reserved for bodhisattvas at an extremely advanced stage of spiritual progress; on the contrary, all men, women, and children who perform even the smallest act of devotion based on faith can now share in this exalted state.”

<sup>71</sup> Regarding the definition of “the later tradition” here, although Schopen (2005, 206) clarifies that he does not intend to reconstruct an “absolute chronology,” he still gives a rough date of what he calls “medieval Mahāyāna literature.” In contrast to “early” sūtras like the *Aṣṭa*, the *Upāli*, and the *Pratyutpanna* (ibid.), the “medieval” ideas and texts are those “that were current and being used or acted upon during a period extending from the fifth/sixth century to the twelfth century and even later, even though there are indications that some forms of the ideas may have been older—for example, those expressed by Nāgārjuna and Asaṅga/Maitreya-nātha” (ibid., 207). Meanwhile, Drewes (2021, 171) suggests that the attainment of prediction was generalized “soon” after the *Aṣṭa*. Considering our question here—i.e., the absence of signs for key attainments in the *Dbh*, etc.—like Drewes, I use “later” loosely to refer to texts like the *Pañca* and the *Dbh*, which were presumably composed after the preliminary stage of development of the notion of the bodhisattva path. Nonetheless, as Schopen has already pointed out and I have discussed in the Introduction, we cannot draw a definite chronology of these scriptures.

<sup>72</sup> The *SZPPSL*’s “Chapter of Easy Practice” (易行品) offers two paths to irreversibility: one by “diligent practice of intensive exertion” (that is, by hard practice; Chn. 勤行精進), the other by “the skillful means of faith” (that is, by easy practice; Chn. 信方便). More specifically, the so-called “easy practice” is “keeping, bearing, and chanting the names [of buddhas]” (執持稱名號). As pointed out by Miyaji (1958, 366ff) and Blum (1994, 46–47), this was an important source of inspiration for the easy practice advocated by later Pure Land Buddhism. For the whole passage, see T. 1521, 41a27–b17; for an English rendition, see Inagaki 1998, 139–140, who has offered a translation of this entire chapter. It is noticeable that the *SZPPSL* includes many doctrines that can be regarded as significantly different from the *Dbh* (this has also been pointed out by Miyaji 1958, 366) and the *Daśabhūmi-vyākhyāna*. For the two commentaries’ different treatment of the *bhūmi* of irreversibility, see Igarashi 1995, 64–72; according to him, Vasubandhu understands a bodhisattva on the eighth *bhūmi* as irreversible whereas the *SZPPSL* claims the first *bhūmi* as the *bhūmi* of irreversibility. As—to date—most studies on the *SZPPSL* have been carried out by scholars who are interested in finding traces of Pure Land Buddhism in this text, I believe the *SZPPSL* remains to be carefully examined from the perspective of the bodhisattva *bhūmis*. Due to the limited scope of this dissertation, I do not intend to delve into too much discussion on the discrepancies between the abovementioned three texts.

Drewes’s observation that a great many Mahāyāna sūtras teach that “those who listen to and devote themselves to it are either already advanced or irreversible bodhisattvas or that they will become irreversible when they hear it” (2021, 168), for which he supplies sufficient evidence, including passages taken from the *Aṣṭa*, the *Akṣobhyavyūha*, the *Pratyutpanna*, the *Śūraṃgamasamādhi*, the *Akṣayamati-nirdeśa*, as well as several manuscripts (ibid., 162–168).

However, I want to argue that the conclusion that later Mahāyāna scriptures recognize their audience as advanced bodhisattvas is problematic.

To begin with, many of the texts that Drewes cites also include schemes of the bodhisattva *bhūmis*, either vague or definite. For example, the *Śūraṃgamasamādhi-sūtra* offers a complete plan of ten bodhisattva *bhūmis*. If the audience of those scriptures are supposedly advanced bodhisattvas, why has so much ink been spilled on lower *bhūmis*, before irreversibility?<sup>73</sup>

Moreover, if we take literally the claim that “encountering and reacting positively to the text” would win bodhisattvas irreversibility (ibid., 168), this raises many doctrinal issues. Again, taking the *Śūraṃgamasamādhi-sūtra* as an example,<sup>74</sup> while Drewes (ibid., 166) states that having “planted roots of merit” and “heard this *samādhi* before from fully enlightened Buddhas of the past” are two *necessary* conditions for having faith, and hence for the attainment of irreversibility,<sup>75</sup> what he neglects is that faith alone is not—as he claims—*sufficient* for becoming an irreversible bodhisattva. Recognizing every follower of this teaching as irreversible would pose an apparent paradox: since the *Śūraṃgamasamādhi-sūtra* is supposedly taught not only in the presence of bodhisattvas and deities but also in the presence of the Buddha’s disciples,

<sup>73</sup> No matter which scheme of the bodhisattva career is concerned, the *bhūmi* of irreversibility is invariably seen as an advanced one: in the ten-stage schemes, it is usually the seventh or the eighth; in other loosely-defined developmental stage schemes such as the “three stages” of the *Lotus Sūtra* or the “four stages” of the *SP*, the stage of “irreversible bodhisattvas” is the second to last stage (see Apple 2011a, 130 and Kajiyoshi 1944, 651–652 respectively).

<sup>74</sup> I investigate this particular text in detail because it also includes an outline of the bodhisattva *bhūmis*, and Lamotte has done appropriate register on this sūtra. Limited by the scope of this thesis, I cannot examine all the examples that Drewes has cited.

<sup>75</sup> According to Drewes’s translation from Tibetan (2021, 166), “[The Buddha’s audience:] ‘As we understand the meaning of what the Bhagavan has said, those beings who hear this Śūraṃgamasamādhi and immediately firmly believe in it are fixed [*\*niyata*] in regard to the [eventual attainment of the] attributes of a Buddha.’ The Buddha said, ‘Son[s] of good family, it is just like that. It is just as you say. Beings who have not planted roots of merit, having heard this teaching, are not able to have faith in it. ... [If] a bodhisattva is able to firmly believe in this *samādhi* ... he has heard this *samādhi* before from fully enlightened Buddhas of the past.’” For the Tibetan, see D. 32, *mdo sde, da* 297a7–297b3. Besides the requirements that Drewes has cited, the text states, “O, sons of good family, a bodhisattva can have conviction (*\*adhimokṣa*) of this *samādhi* if he is endowed with four qualities. If (you) ask: ‘which four?’ [They are: 1.] he has heard this *samādhi* from previous perfectly enlightened buddhas in the past; [2.] he is steadfast in [the state of] being protected by a spiritual teacher (*\*kalyāṇamitra-parigṛhīta*) and having the highest intention (*\*adhyāśaya*); [3.] he has accumulated good roots and he is of the conviction about the noble teaching (*\*udārādhimuktika*); and [4.] he has bodily witnessed this great vehicle [*\*mahāyāna-kāyasākṣin*; see Lamotte 1998, 202–203, n. 263 for an explanation of the term *kāyasākṣin*. According to him, this requirement is to exclude śrāvakas from those who have faith in this *samādhi*]” (Tib. *rigs kyi bu byang chub sems dpa’ chos bzhi dang ldan na ting nge ’dzin ’di la mos par nus so/ bzhi gang zhe na / des sngon gyi yang dag par rdzogs pa’i sangs rgyas rnam las ting nge ’dzin ’di sngon chad thos pa yin / dge ba’i bshes gnyen gyis yongs su zin cing lhag pa’i bsam pa la gnas pa yin / dge ba’i rtsa ba bsags pa dang rgya chen po la mos pa yin / theg pa chen po ’di la lus mngon du byas pa yin te / D32, mdo sde, da, 297b3–4; see also Lamotte 1998, 201–202 §130 for a translation from the Chinese).*

like Mahākāśyapa and Ānanda—whom the tradition widely takes as arhats—if acting positively toward this teaching is *necessary* and *sufficient* for having irreversible enlightenment, then Mahākāśyapa and Ānanda should also immediately have become advanced bodhisattvas. The authors of this text were apparently aware of this dilemma, as they subsequently differentiate having faith in this teaching from “witnessing” this *samādhi* “bodily” (\**kāya-sākṣin*).<sup>76</sup> In this way, the text prevents arhats from achieving advanced bodhisattva status.<sup>77</sup> Other Mahāyāna sūtras also make similar statements that, despite hearing and acting positively toward a Mahāyāna teaching, śrāvakas cannot be qualified as bodhisattvas.<sup>78</sup>

This makes it clear that hearing and believing the teaching are *necessary* but not *sufficient* for becoming an irreversible bodhisattva. Besides conviction (*adhimokṣa*),<sup>79</sup>

<sup>76</sup> For a full overview of the connotations of the corresponding term in the Pāli canon (i.e., *kāya-sakkhi*), see Jantrasrisalai 2009, 193–199. Accordingly, “a bodily witness [*kāya-sakkhi*] is one who has realised or penetrated the deliverances [*vimokkhas*] by ‘touching’ them ‘with body’” (ibid., 196) which is “one mode of penetrating or realising the dhamma” (ibid., 195). The exact stage of “a bodily witness” in terms of the path to arhatship is disputed in different Pāli texts (ibid., 193–199). See also the usage of this term in Buddhaghosa’s *Visuddhimagga* in the context of different kinds of saints (Pāli *ariya*). The text basically equates “to bodily witness” with “to experience” or “to realize” (Pāli *sacchikaroti*); see Rhys Davids 1975, 659.14ff; for an English translation, see Ñāṇamoli 2010, 688f. It should be noted here that the term *sākṣātkaroti* (“to realize”) in Mahāyāna scriptures and treatises, especially when pairing with a “cessation” (*nirodha*) or “supreme truth” (*bhūtakoti*), carries a much different connotation. It is because, as taught in the *DZDL* and other comparable texts, the Bodhisattva on the seventh stage, having acquired receptivity to the nonproduction of dharmas, could also give up further practice and “realize” nirvāṇa, for he is already enlightened. If he realizes or enters into nirvāṇa, however, this would in fact earn him the fruit of the inferior paths rather than buddhahood—which is certainly a far less favorable result for advocates of the bodhisattva path (T. 1509, 132a19–b4; Lamotte 1944–1980, I: 588–589; for a discussion on this idea in the *DZDL*, see Takeda 1993). Therefore, sūtras like the *Dbh* state that although a bodhisattva has attained (*samāpadyate*) a cessation (*nirodha*) already at the sixth *bhūmi*, he does not “realize” or “actualize” (*sākṣātkaroti*) it at the seventh *bhūmi* (for this passage, see Kondō 1936, 122.10–123.7 and Saerji 2020, 358.10–360.1). For an overview of the treatment related to the problem of “realizing (*sākṣātkaroti*) the supreme truth (*bhūtakoti*)” in Mahāyāna sūtras, see Choong 2011; for similar issues discussed in the *Bodhisattvabhūmi*, Choong 2013.

<sup>77</sup> To cite Lamotte’s translation from Chinese: arhats “who adhere through faith (*śraddhā*) to the word of the Buddha (*tathāgata*) believe the *Śūraṅgamasamādhi*, but do not witness it bodily (*na tu kāyena sākṣātkurvanti*). Why? Because this *samādhi* cannot be penetrated (*gatimṅata*) by the Śrāvakas and Pratyekabuddhas and even less so by other beings” (Lamotte 1998, 202–203 §131; see also the Tibetan translation in D32, *mdo sde, da*, 297b4–6; there is no substantial difference between the two translations). The text later repeats that even when śrāvakas like Ānanda have heard this teaching, the bodhisattva attainments are not applicable to them (Lamotte 1998, 210–211 §136).

<sup>78</sup> For example, in the *Drumakinnararāja-paripṛcchā*, Ānanda regrets that even though he has received and kept (Tib. *bzung*; Chn. 受持) the teaching of the *Drumakinnararāja-paripṛcchā*, he cannot reach a higher spiritual state than that of a śrāvaka due to his limited intelligence (Tib. *blo chung*; Chn. 有限量智). For this passage, see *Dashu jinnaluowang suowen jing* 大樹緊那羅王所問經 (tr. Kumārajīva), T. 625, 387b29–c9 and *Dunzhentuolu suowen rulai sanmei jing* 他真陀羅所問如來三昧經 (tr. Lokakṣema), T. 624, 366a26–b4; for the Tibetan translation, see Harrison 1992a, 181–182 §15A. For the textual history of the translations of this sūtra, see ibid., xiii–xvi.

<sup>79</sup> It is also unclear how we should understand terms like “conviction” (*adhimokṣa*) in their context. As I have briefly discussed regarding the term *adhimuktīcaryābhūmi* (Chapter 5, n. 2), *adhimokṣa* (as well as *adhimukti*) has two layers of meanings—confidence and zealous application. Although I translate this term tentatively as “conviction” in this thesis, as noted by Deleanu (2006, 472, n. 15), when it comes to the context of “spiritual cultivation,” “*Adhimukti* seems to encompass here three closely connected mental processes: (1) the yogi’s effort to apply himself intently upon his meditative object; (2) the ability to represent the object mentally [...]; and (3) the capacity to internalize it, i.e., to become convinced of this representation.” Therefore, to have *adhimokṣa* also seems to require one’s commitment. In the *Śūraṅgamasamādhi*, before the passage that Drewes (2021, 166) cites, the text also tells the audience that they should “have faith [in the teaching], not be afraid [of it], not be terrified [of it], learn it, retain it, recite it, master it, and teach it” (Tib. *’yid ches par bgyid / mi skrag mi dngang dngang bar mi ’gyur gyi / len par bgyid / ’dzin par bgyid / klog par bgyid / kun chub par bgyid / ’chad par bgyid*, D32, *mdo sde, da*, 297a5–6). Although it appears to be a stock phrase (cf. similar phases in the *Vajracchedikā Prajñāpāramitā*, Harrison 2022, 651–652), it is also possible that “believing” or “having faith” is rather an abbreviation of a series of devotional actions in regard to a teaching. The Chinese translation also tells bodhisattvas to “apply their efforts to it” (Lamotte

the actual attainment of irreversibility still entails other bodhisattva practices.<sup>80</sup> Although the *Śūraṅgamasamādhi* (as well as other texts) promises its audience an advanced future status (e.g., becoming irreversible bodhisattvas) if they act in accordance with the teaching—perhaps as a way of promoting itself, as previous scholars have suggested<sup>81</sup>—such texts do not actually “identify all of their followers as irreversible,” as Drewes (2021, 171) states.<sup>82</sup> In other words, texts that include such promises assure their audience that irreversibility is attainable, but cannot be attained so easily as by *merely hearing* the teaching.

1998, 201 §129). Therefore, attaining irreversibility may require more effort from bodhisattvas than merely hearing or believing the relevant teaching.

<sup>80</sup> Also, a passage of the *Aṣṭa* that I have previously cited explicitly claims that “faith” alone is not sufficient for obtaining receptivity to the nonproduction of dharmas: “Subhūti, furthermore, there are bodhisattvas *mahāsattvas* who practice the Perfection of Wisdom who believe that ‘all dharmas do not arise,’ [but] not to the extent that they have obtained receptivity to the nonproduction of dharmas” (Wogihara 1932–1935, II: 856.24–27; see my Chapter 2, n. 47).

<sup>81</sup> Drewes (2021, 169) presents as counterarguments to his position the following: “Paul Harrison argues that passages of this sort represent an example of *captatio benevolentiae*, an attempt to curry favor with one’s audience through exaggerated flattery, and that they were not intended to be taken literally. Similarly maintaining this old vision, Nattier argues that Mahāyāna emerged from a small number of dedicated, primarily male, ascetics, who decided to undertake the ‘grueling’ bodhisattva path from the beginning, and that passages claiming that the followers of Mahāyāna sūtras are already irreversible represent a later ‘act of democratization’ intended to broaden the path’s appeal.” According to my analysis in this section, I tend to agree with the view held by Harrison and Nattier. Moreover, in a recent paper, Harrison (2022, 662–666) has further shown that “formulaic expansion” of Mahāyāna sūtras often leads to an expansion of “attainment or spiritual status” (ibid., 663) mentioned or promised by the sūtras, and “exuberance of this kind of can sometimes take it beyond the point originally intended, even to the point of generating nonsense” (ibid., 662). In other words, in some cases, even if an extant version of a Mahāyāna sūtra indeed identifies all its followers as irreversible bodhisattvas, it could well be a result of textual expansion, rather than a doctrinal development.

<sup>82</sup> In addition, Drewes (2021, 166) identifies the state of being “fixed [*\*niyata*] in regard to the [eventual attainment of the] attributes of a Buddha” (Tib. *sangs rgyas kyi chos la nges par ’gyur ro*, D32, *mdo sde, da*, 297b1) as that of being “irreversible” in the *Śūraṅgamasamādhi-sūtra*. There are two problems here. First, the exact connotation of the term *niyata* (“certainty”) is disputable. Gilks (2010, 233) has pointed out that, as in the *Pañca*, this term either indeed equates to “irreversibility,” or it refers to a condition that a bodhisattva enters at the beginning of the bodhisattva career. In addition, we find the *Dbh* also claims that a bodhisattva of the first *bhūmi* “has surpassed [the *bhūmi* of ordinary people], he is born into the fixed [position] of bodhisattvas in the family of tathāgatas” (Skt. *avakrānto bhavati bodhisattvaniyāmaṃ jāto bhavati tathāgatakule*, Kondō 1936, 16.10). But, regarding this sentence, Vo Thi Van Anh (2018, 124) argues that “the *nyāmāvakrānti* that was used both in the first and seventh stages of the [*Dbh*] cannot be found in its original version;” rather, “the term *nyāmāvakrānti* as found in the explanatory context of the first *bhūmi* demonstrates that it was inserted later, based on the understanding of the *bhūmi* theory of the Yogācāra school” (ibid., 125). Secondly, if we look at the source of what Drewes (2021, 166) translates as “those beings who hear this *Śūraṅgamasamādhi* and immediately firmly believe in it **are fixed** [*\*niyata*] in regard to the [eventual attainment of the] attributes of a Buddha,” we find that the corresponding Tibetan text does not specify whether these people “**are fixed**” or “**will be fixed**” in regard to the buddhadharmas as the verb—at least in the Derge edition that Drewes cites—could imply both times (*nges par ’gyur ro*; D32, *mdo sde, da*, 297b1). Therefore, we cannot rule out that, according to the understanding of the Tibetan translators of the *Śūraṅgamasamādhi*, this event will happen in the future. The Chinese is also ambiguous about this question, and Lamotte (1998, 201 §129) understands it as a future event, as evidenced by his translation—“those beings will definitively and irreversibly be predestined regarding the Buddha attributes (*\*buddha-dharma-niyata*)” (Chn. 當知是人得住佛法畢定不退. T. 642, 641a16). Similarly, Drewes’s example from the *Drumakinnararāja* states that those who cherish this sūtra “should be known as good men [*\*satpuruṣa*] headed toward the seat of enlightenment [*\*bodhimaṇḍa*]” (Drewes 2021, 166; Tib. *byang chub kyi snying por gzhol ba ’i skyes bu dam par rig par bya ’o* // Harrison 1992, 284 §15B). The Chinese translation of the same passage reads “such a person is fixed (*\*niyata*) to proceed toward the seat of enlightenment” (Chn. 如是之人定趣道場. T. 625, 387c19–20), which implies the event will happen in the future. Considering the ambiguity of the statement in the two cases, we cannot say for sure whether *niyata* indicates the person is *already* an irreversible bodhisattva.

## From Ordinary People to Saints

Considering the above facts, I disagree with Drewes's conclusion (2021, 171) that "the question of one's specific level of attainment" ceased to be "a matter of active concern" soon after the preliminary stage of the emergence of Mahāyāna, due to every follower being recognized as having achieved a high attainment such as irreversibility. In my opinion, on the contrary, the concern over one's spiritual attainment was resolved by elevating advanced achievements like irreversibility to a status *completely* beyond the audience of the sūtras. When these attainments are beyond the audience, the practical issues that come with them—such as the need to find out one's status—are no longer a source of active concern to them. This explains why, except for the *SvN* and the *Aṣṭa*, few later scriptures concern themselves with the signs of spiritual attainments such as prediction and irreversibility.

To be sure, we have to be cautious about proposing the above hypothesis. First, "the" Mahāyāna tradition certainly does not evolve in only one direction.<sup>83</sup> What I argue here is that, as far as the scriptures that elaborate on schemes of bodhisattva *bhūmis* are concerned, the general trend is to further raise the bar for irreversible bodhisattvas. Secondly, this process certainly did not take place solely to resolve the problem of revealing and confirming one's spiritual attainment. The changes made to the bodhisattva ideal should be seen as an outcome of a complex of factors—the further details are beyond the scope of this study. Here, I intend only to follow my hypothesis that the need to resolve the uncertainty of followers of the bodhisattva path also contributed to the deliberate elevation of the bodhisattva ideal. Thirdly and more importantly, measuring and comparing a spiritual status or the difficulty of a particular spiritual attainment is not only tricky for followers within the tradition, but also challenging for modern scholars. Considering the complexity of the schemes of the bodhisattva developmental stages, in order to understand the underlying worldview, we need a standard to measure the feasibility of entry-level bodhisattva practice and advanced achievement. One such cue was already discussed at the very beginning of this chapter: Sapaṇ's comment on the *SvN*. In this comment, Sapaṇ—a scholar of the later Tibetan Buddhist tradition—states that there is a distinction between *bhūmis* of "the practice of conviction" and *bhūmis* of "saints;" according to him, the *bhūmis* of the *SvN*—an early Mahāyāna sūtra—are in fact *bhūmis* of "the practice of conviction," which are proper to ordinary people. Perhaps we can follow this lead and use the

<sup>83</sup> For example, we have discussed the "easy practice," such as reciting buddhas' names, which is highlighted by the tradition that is designated as Pure Land Buddhism. It appears that, with such a method, attaining irreversibility is quite feasible for practitioners of Pure Land Buddhism. However, as Blum has pointed out, "by trying to assert that ordinary beings, not advanced bodhisattvas, were capable of attaining these difficult practices, the important thinkers of the Pure Land movement were, in a word, trying to do the impossible" (Blum 1994, 72), and this assertion creates much tension within the later development of the "Pure Land" idea (ibid., 71–72).

distinction between “ordinary people” (*prthagjana*) and “saints” (*ārya*) to find out how the scriptures perceive the bodhisattva ideal. However, if we take the transition between ordinary people and saints as a reference point, we need to make sure that this pair of concepts remains stable. Can we assume any Buddhist concept has not undergone disputes or modification? The notion of *ārya* vs. *prthagjana* is certainly also a topic of constant debate, especially in Abhidharmas.<sup>84</sup> Nonetheless, despite the divergence in details, the connotations of this pair of terms and the interpretation of the essential distinction between ordinary people and saints seem to be consistent in Buddhist traditions: an ordinary person is someone who has not yet obtained the noble qualities (*ārya-dharmas*), most importantly, the doctrine of the Buddha.<sup>85</sup>

Following this clue, on a large scale, we indeed see a clear pattern that the bodhisattva ideal is gradually exalted. Evidently, by traditional accounts, Śākyamuni Bodhisattva himself was still an ordinary person shortly before his awakening.<sup>86</sup> Also, the ideal of the Bodhisattva in general seems less refined and less differentiated in early traditions.<sup>87</sup> In contrast, in the later scholarly tradition, a bodhisattva of the first *bhūmi* is already considered an advanced and morally pure saint. A consensus in later exegetic treatises is that the transition from an ordinary person to a first-*bhūmi* bodhisattva is significant

<sup>84</sup> The connotations of the two terms are mostly discussed in the context of the transition from ordinary person to saint. For a summary of divergent Abhidharmic views on this topic, see Kawamura 1960. Different views on the nature of ordinary people (*prthagjana*) are discussed in the *Mahāvibhāṣā* (T. 1545, 231b21–235c03); for a summary of the *Mahāvibhāṣā*’s view on the transition from the ordinary people to a noble one, see Ichimura *et al.* 1996, 513ff. For Cox’s discussion on the early Sarvāstivādin Abhidharma treatises’ position on the *prthagjanatva*, see Cox 1995, 88ff. For the *Abhidharmakośa-bhāṣya*’s discussion on “[t]he noble truths and their relationship to the noble ones and ordinary worldlings,” see La Vallée Poussin 2012, III: 1878ff. La Vallée Poussin 2012, I: 436, n. 493 also gives several references to this topic. For a more detailed summarization of Yogācāra and Sautrāntika’s views on this subject, see Eltschinger 2009, 170–173. In addition, Vinītadeva and Kamalaśīla’s view on this transition in relation to yogic perception (*yogipratyakṣa*) can be found in Funayama 2011a, 100–107. The factor leading to this transition is generally called the ‘highest mundane factor’ (*laukikāgradharma*) in Sarvāstivādin and Mahāyāna exegetic tradition, see Buswell and Jaini 1996, 109.

<sup>85</sup> For example, Saṅghabhadra defines *prthagjanatva* in his *\*Nyāyānusāra* (*Apidamo shunzhengli lun* 阿毘達磨順正理論, T. 1562) as follows: “the phrase ‘the non-acquisition of the noble factors’ is used to define the nature of an ordinary person (*prthagjanatva*), [because an ordinary person is one who has not yet attained noble factors]” (Cox 1995, 186; see also *ibid.*, 202–206 for further details). According to *\*Kātyāyanīputra* (迦多衍尼子), “the transition point from an ordinary being (*prthagjana*) to being a noble (*ārya*) person [is] ‘abandoning the affairs of an ordinary being and obtaining the doctrine of the Buddha; abandoning heterodox affairs and obtaining the true doctrine’ (T.26.1543, 771c15–16). Moreover, [Kātyāyanīputra] argues, all heterodox views are to be abandoned through one of the four noble truths that encapsulate Buddhist doctrine” (Dessein 2023, 175). The general definition of “ordinary people,” per Eltschinger (2009, 170), is that “the ordinary person is one in whose psychic stream the path of seeing (*darśanamārga*), the four noble truths (*āryasatya*) or, to be more precise, the supramundane (*lokottara*) noble factors (*āryadharmas*), have not yet arisen.” Eltschinger (2013, 270–271) also extends his study to the Abhidharmic materials on the “condition of the *prthagjanas* as opposed to the *āryas*,” and concludes that the whole picture is coherent within Abhidharmic and later Mahāyāna exegetical traditions.

<sup>86</sup> Śākyamuni was still an ordinary person as he sat under the bodhi tree before attaining nirvāṇa. This is aptly discussed in the *Abhidharmakośa-bhāṣya* (La Vallée Poussin 2012, I: 566–568 §II: 204–205). Accounts of this belief can also be found in the *DZDL* and other sources; see Lamotte’s notes in 1944–1980, III: 1556, n. 1.

<sup>87</sup> It is noticeable that the Bodhisattva in the *Jātakas* is less refined in morals and intelligence. According to Appleton (2010, 26), “Despite the pervasive idea that *jātakas* demonstrate the perfections, the Bodhisattva sometimes acts badly, both within a Buddhist framework and according to what we might consider universal standards of morality.” For summaries of such stories and an analysis, see *ibid.*, 26–36.

and only possible for already advanced practitioners.<sup>88</sup> There is consequently no need to mention how advanced the irreversible bodhisattvas are.

Further, as I have just argued above, we cannot take prescriptions and promises of the attainments as the only evidence of whether such goals are easily achievable. Instead, it is necessary to examine if there were practitioners recognized by the tradition as having attained these goals. From this perspective, again, we can see a contrast between the recognition of saints in mainstream Buddhist traditions and in the later scholarly Mahāyāna tradition. Although both the Abhidharma tradition of mainstream schools and the Mahāyāna scholastic tradition understand a stream-enterer (*srotāpanna*; i.e., the first of the four developmental stages of an arhat) as a saint (*ārya*),<sup>89</sup> we occasionally see monks titled as *ārya* in inscriptions and manuscripts belonging to mainstream schools;<sup>90</sup> however, in the Mahāyāna tradition, records of certified saints are few.<sup>91</sup> Moreover, some of the most prominent scholars of Mahāyāna traditions are considered to be bodhisattvas of surprisingly low *bhūmis*: for example, Nāgārjuna is but a first-*bhūmi* bodhisattva, while Vasubandhu had not yet entered any of the *bhūmis* (Funayama 2003, 134).<sup>92</sup> As for high attainments like irreversibility and receptivity to

<sup>88</sup> According to Funayama (2019, 99–100), the *Mahāyānasūtrālamkāra* and the *Samādhinirmocana-sūtra* are among the first works to assert that a bodhisattva surpasses the state of ordinary people and becomes a saint on the first *bhūmi*. Later scholarly tradition follows this claim. Note that although the *Dbh* also claims a bodhisattva of the first *bhūmi* is beyond the *bhūmi* of ordinary people, it does not explicitly say such a bodhisattva has become a saint.

<sup>89</sup> For example, according to Candrakīrti's description of the first *bhūmi* in the *Madhyamakāvatāra*, "For him [any possibility of] life as a common man is now absolutely exhausted, and he is assigned the same [status] as a saint of the eighth rank" (Huntington 1989, 148 §1.7; for the Tibetan, see Q5261, *dbu ma*, 'a, 245b2; for the newly published Sanskrit text, see Lasic, Li & MacDonald 2022, 12.3–4). Candrakīrti has clarified in his autocommentary that a saint of "the eighth rank" (Tib. *brgyad pa*; Skt. *aṣṭamaka*; "who would normally be assigned the first (lowest) rank in the series of *āryapudgalas*, or Buddhist saints," Huntington 1989, 220, n. 13) refers to a "stream-enterer" (ibid., 1989, 220; for the corresponding passage in Sanskrit, see Lasic, Li & MacDonald 2022, 6–7). For the *Abhidharmakośa-bhāṣya*'s exposition on the fruit of a stream-enterer in relation to the status of being an *ārya*, see La Vallée Poussin 2012, III: 1940–1946. This assertion is aptly found in Pāli and Sanskrit treatises.

<sup>90</sup> This is evidenced by inscriptions on stūpas that preserve the remains of local individual monks. For example, one monk from Sāñcī is titled *ara*—likely a Prakrit form of Sanskrit *ārya* (Schopen 1997, 186–187). In addition, one Niya Kharoṣṭhī document refers to someone as *aya*, which Burrow (1937, 75) claims to be a Gāndhārī equivalent of *ārya* that "has a purely religious sense." However, not much information can be inferred from this document, and the one who bears this title does not appear in other Niya documents; for the manuscript in question, see [www.gandhari.org/catalog?itemID=1568](http://www.gandhari.org/catalog?itemID=1568). In all these cases, the exact significance of this title is still ambiguous; it may just be an honorific term and without real relevance to actual spiritual attainment of those who bore this title. However, as Funayama notes (2019, 125), in Kaṇheri, there are stūpas that record individual monks as having attained the third or the fourth state of arhat. For the stūpa for a monk who was recognized as having become an *aṇāgāmin*, see Kaṇheri inscription No. 54 in Tsukamoto 1996, 445; for more than twenty stūpas for monks who were designated as an *arhat* (sometimes together with a list of their other achievements), see ibid., 445–451. In Amarāvātī, one inscription mentions one monk bears both the title *arhat* and *ārya* (No. 1280; Lüders [1912] 1973, 152–153). In addition, the travelogues of Xuanzang and Faxian record many accounts of historical Indian monks who presumably truly existed and were recognized to have reached arhatship (Funayama 2019, 124).

<sup>91</sup> Funayama (2019) has discussed this issue extensively in his recent book, but much attention is paid to East Asian traditions. As far as Indian Mahāyāna is concerned, there are very few such accounts; see the next footnote.

<sup>92</sup> Funayama has surveyed the issue of *bhūmi* with regard to three prominent Indian Buddhist scholars, namely, Nāgārjuna, Asaṅga, and Vasubandhu. The claim that Nāgārjuna dwells on the first *bhūmi* is first attested in the *Lankāvatārasūtra* and widely accepted in India, China, and Tibet (Funayama 2003, 132–133). This claim "did not belong to folk beliefs, but was officially accepted by scholarly monks of the Madhyamaka school" (Funayama 2011a, 109). It is noteworthy that many Chinese Buddhists, perhaps surprised by the low status of Nāgārjuna, claim he was rather an advanced bodhisattva (Funayama 2019, 22–26). For example, Sengrui's preface to the *DZDL* claims that Aśvaghōṣa and Nāgārjuna "reached the tenth stage, and that on their path they attained *eka-jāti-pratibaddha*" for their great accomplishment (Felber 2018, 232). As for the case of Asaṅga, the mainstream Tibetan tradition (per Bu ston's account) and some Indian scholars (e.g., Ratnākaraśānti) take Asaṅga as a third-*bhūmi* bodhisattva (Funayama

the nonproduction of dharmas, it seems that only those rather mythological figures like Śākyamuni Buddha and Maitreya are widely acknowledged as having attained them.<sup>93</sup> This again confirms that, for the later scholarly traditions, entering the bodhisattva *bhūmi* itself is a high achievement. In other words, in this view, any of the ten *bhūmis* are beyond common practitioners.

However, these pieces of evidence rather show an overall trend that spans a thousand years. They do not answer our question about the shift of the bodhisattva ideal within early Mahāyāna sūtras. The question raised at the beginning of this section remains unanswered: why, in the *LP* and the *Dbh*, is it possible to order bodhisattvas not to reflect on their attainments, while in the *SvN*, knowledge of a bodhisattva's status is a necessity?

Previously, we have reviewed how later Mahāyāna scholarly treatises often highlight the distinction between ordinary people and saints and describe a bodhisattva of the first *bhūmi* as significantly superior to common people (e.g., in Candrakīrti's *Madhyamakāvatāra*; see Huntington 1989, 149–150). However, scriptures of an earlier period rarely elaborate on the transition from the state of ordinary people to that of saints.<sup>94</sup> Even though the notion of *prthagjana-bhūmi* is frequently referred to, it is mostly included as one of the four *bhūmis*, together with the *śrāvaka-bhūmi*, the *pratyekabuddha-bhūmi*, and the *buddha-bhūmi*.<sup>95</sup> Further, later scholastic works on the bodhisattva *bhūmis* generally introduce a prolonged and concrete preparatory (*prayoga*) training phase<sup>96</sup> for ordinary people (Funayama 2011a, 108). Yet a preparatory phase

2003, 129–130), whereas the Chinese treatises generally maintain that Aśaṅga is a first-*bhūmi* bodhisattva (although the earliest claim of Aśaṅga being a first-*bhūmi* bodhisattva can also be traced to India, i.e., to Xuanzang's translation of Jinaputra's commentary on the *Yogācārabhūmi*, *ibid.*, 128–129). Finally, Vasubandhu is held by the Chinese tradition as not yet having entered the bodhisattva *bhūmis*; more concretely, he is at the “stage of the heated” (*uṣmagata*) (*ibid.*, 125–128) which is the lowest stage of acquiring “the four factors that are conducive to insight” (*nirvedhabhāgīya*; for these four factors, see Dessein 2023, 181). See also Funayama 2011a, 107–111; 2019, 13–28.

<sup>93</sup> As we have noted previously, the *Sūramgamasamādhi* claims that Śākyamuni Buddha and Maitreya obtained a prophecy through their attainment of receptivity to the nonproduction of dharmas (T. 642, 639b20–21). To be sure, Śākyamuni was once a historical figure, but as far as the stories of his previous lives are concerned, he has become more of a mythological figure, whereas “historical” figures such as Nāgārjuna also have mythological stories attached to them. Though the figures of Śākyamuni and Nāgārjuna are neither completely historical nor mythological, relatively speaking, Nāgārjuna is “historical,” whereas Śākyamuni is more “mythological.”

<sup>94</sup> For example, with regard to the *Mahāvastu*, Rahula (1978, 55) asserts, “Factors that would lead an ordinary being to the sanctified state of bodhisattva-hood are worthy of consideration at length. The [*Mahāvastu*] does not chalk out these points clearly, for it belongs to a period when the bodhisattva ideal had not yet taken its fully developed form.” The *Mahāvastu* makes some references to the state of ordinary people, but it seems true that the exact transition from the state of ordinary people to that of saints is vague in this text. Within the scheme of the four *caryās*, according to Tournier (2017, 207), bodhisattvas in the first *caryā* are still *prthagjana*. Within the scheme of the ten *bhūmis*, this issue is discussed in regard with irreversibility. Accordingly, bodhisattvas of the first seven *bhūmis* do not fall into bad destinies as do “ordinary men” (Senart 1882, I: 102.12–103.1), although it is unclear whether this means a bodhisattva separates himself from ordinary men from the first *bhūmi*. To be sure, as reiterated many times in this dissertation, the *Mahāvastu* is hardly an “early” scripture, but some parts, such as that concerning the *caryās*, are representative of earlier ideas.

<sup>95</sup> E.g., in the *Aṣṭa*, see Wogihara 1932–1935, II: 666.3–5 and Karashima 2011, 303–304. The *LP* also makes several references to the *prthagjana-bhūmi*, besides the same usage as in the *Aṣṭa* which I cite above, it sometimes appears together with the four states of arhatship (Ozawa 1988, 99–101).

<sup>96</sup> For example, in the *Bodhisattvabhūmi*, the preparatory stages are the stage of “lineage” (*gotra-bhūmi/vihāra*) and the stage of “the practice of conviction” (*adhimuktīcaryā-bhūmi/vihāra*); for the sources and descriptions of these

before the first bodhisattva *bhūmi* appears quite alien to sūtras on the *bhūmis*.<sup>97</sup> The lack of material on this question poses significant challenges for our survey.

Still, there are some key Mahāyāna scriptures that discuss the term *prthagjana-bhūmi*<sup>98</sup> in the context of the developmental stages of bodhisattvas. For a bodhisattva of the first *bhūmi*, the *Dbh* promises:

Immediately when a bodhisattva generates [his] thought [of enlightenment], he surpasses the *bhūmi* of ordinary people. Having entered the fixed [position] of bodhisattvas (*bodhisattva-niyāma*), he was born in the family of tathāgatas (*tathāgata-kula*). He is faultless in all accounts of his births, and he has separated [himself] from all mundane destinies (*loka-gati*). Having entered the supramundane destinies (*lokottarā-gati*), he is abiding in the true nature of bodhisattvas. Having been steadfast in the abode of bodhisattvas (*bodhisattvāvasthāna*), he observes equality [toward beings] and is tied to the lineages of tathāgatas (*tathāgata-vaṃśa*) of the three times and devoted to full enlightenment.<sup>99</sup>

On this *bhūmi*, a bodhisattva also reflects on the suffering and faults of ignorant ordinary people (*bāla-prthagjana*), which gives us a glimpse of the text's perception of the state of ordinary people.<sup>100</sup> However, while it is certain that this cognition of the suffering of ordinary people is essential to becoming a bodhisattva, the description of ordinary people here contains no implication of what leads to the transition to the status of saint. Besides this ambiguity, however, the *Dbh* unambiguously claims that a

stages, see Kragh 2013, 206–207. For the preparatory training as described in the *Abhisamayālaṅkāra* and its subcommentaries, see Apple 2011b, 174–177.

<sup>97</sup> Lamotte (1944–1980, IV: 1783–1784) has already pointed out that early sūtras rarely include any preparatory stages. He also gives a list of references to the relatively early sources of the preparatory training found in Abhidharmas. There are certainly exceptions: for example, one text of the MRK collection mentions “abiding in the dharmas of the heated (\**ūṣman*)” (Chn. 住於煖法)—a term that is first found in Sarvāstivādin Abhidharmas and then widely adopted by Mahāyāna scholastic tradition—in the context of the bodhisattva career (in the \**Rāśmisamantamukta-nirdeśa*, *Chuxian guangming hui* 出現光明會, T. 310 [11], 189c29). However, not only is such evidence rare, we also do not know if such terms were interpolated under the influence of later exegetic traditions.

<sup>98</sup> According to the *Nyāyānusāra* of Saṅghabhadra, “The ‘stage of being an ordinary person’ referred to in this passage is precisely the nature of an ordinary person” (Cox 1995, 204; for the Chinese, see T. 1562, 399b18). Similarly, in our context, the stage of ordinary person seems to equate to the state of being an ordinary person.

<sup>99</sup> Skt. *yena cittotpādena sahotpannena bodhisattvo 'ūkrānto bhavati prthagjanabhūmīm / avakrānto bhavati bodhisattvaniyāmaṃ jāto bhavati tathāgatakule / anavadyo bhavati sarvajātivādena vyāvṛtto bhavati sarvalokagatibhyaḥ / avakrānto bhavati lokottarāṃ gatiṃ sthito bhavati bodhisattvadharmatāyām / suvyavasthito bhavati bodhisattvāvasthāne samatānugato bhavati tryadhvatathāgatavaṃśāniyato bhavati saṃbodhiparāyaṇaḥ /* Kondō 1936, 16.8–13; see Honda 1968, 128 for an English translation. See also Saerji 2023, 288.2–7 for the readings from a manuscript kept in Tibet.

<sup>100</sup> See Kondō 1936, 23.11–24.10; for an English translation, see Honda 1968, 134–135.

bodhisattva separates himself from ordinary people on the first *bhūmi*, simultaneous with generating his thought of enlightenment (*cittotpāda*).<sup>101</sup>

Nonetheless, this distinction can hardly be found in other important Mahāyāna scriptures on the bodhisattva developmental stages. For example, neither the smaller nor larger *Prajñāpāramitā* explicitly incorporates the concept of the *bhūmi* of common people or that of saints into the scheme of a bodhisattva's progress. Only a commentary on the *LP*, the *DZDL*, provides an answer to this question. The *DZDL* links the stage of “the eighth rank” (*aṣṭamaka*)—which is commonly considered the starting point of sainthood—to a specific phase of bodhisattva development. The passage below contains the description of the first three shared *bhūmis*.

[1.] *bhūmi* of clear vision (*śuklavidarśanā-bhūmi*). This is of two kinds: first, that of śrāvakas; second, that of bodhisattvas. [...] For a bodhisattva who has just generated the thought of enlightenment (*\*prathamacittotpāda*), [this *bhūmi* covers the course of a bodhisattva's progress] so long as he has not attained conformable receptivity (*\*ānulomikī kṣānti*).

[2.] *bhūmi* of lineage (*gotra-bhūmi*) [...] For a bodhisattva, [this is the stage in which] he acquires conformable receptivity. He is attached to the true nature of dharmas (*\*dharmāṇāṃ dharmatā*) and does not produce any faulty views (*\*mithyā-drṣṭi*) [anymore]. He obtains the water of *dhyāna* concentration.

[3.] *bhūmi* of the eighth rank (*aṣṭamaka-bhūmi*) [...] For a bodhisattva, [this is the stage in which] he obtains receptivity to the nonproduction of dharmas and enters the fixed position of bodhisattvas (*\*bodhisattva-niyāma*).<sup>102</sup>

Comparing this scheme with the bodhisattva *bhūmis* as described in the *Dbh*,<sup>103</sup> Lamotte concludes that the first common *bhūmi*—*śuklavidarśanā-bhūmi*—covers the first five bodhisattva *bhūmis* of the *Dbh* *bhūmi* system; the *gotra-bhūmi* equates to the sixth bodhisattva *bhūmi*; and the attainment of the *aṣṭamaka-bhūmi* is the same as the

<sup>101</sup> Note that the exact definition of “thought of enlightenment” in the *Dbh* is complex, see Kondō 1936, 15.12–16.8 for the long list of modification of this “*bodhāya citta*.” Here I do not attempt to differentiate the understanding of “the thought for enlightenment” in this sūtra from those in other texts.

<sup>102</sup> Chn. 乾慧地有二種：一者，聲聞；二者，菩薩。[...]於菩薩，則初發心乃至未得順忍。性地者，[...]於菩薩，得順忍，愛著諸法實相，亦不生邪見，得禪定水。八人地者，[...]於菩薩則是無生法忍，入菩薩位。T. 1509, 585c28–586a9. See also Lamotte 1944–1980, V: 2380 and Sawazaki 2022, 41–42. The phrase 禪定水 rarely occurs in the canon, and I cannot find a satisfactory interpretation of the phrase. It is possible that this term “water of *dhyāna* concentration” signifies an advanced stage of meditative practice, as opposed to (according to the alternative reading of the name of) the first *bhūmi*—the stage of “dry vision” (*\*śuṣkavidarśanā*), which is interpreted by Lamotte as “not soaked by [meditative] absorption” (Lamotte 1944–1980, V: 2377). Besides, it is worth noting that the first developmental stage of the twelve-abode scheme in the *Bodhisattvabhūmi* is *gotra-vihāra*—a preparatory stage that has the same name as the second shared *bhūmi* here—though the description of the *gotra-vihāra* in the later Yogācāra works differs quite drastically from the one here; see Gilks 2010, 262.

<sup>103</sup> Although here I follow Lamotte's interpretation, we should note that the exact relationship between the “shared *bhūmis*” as described in the *DZDL*, the unnamed ten *bhūmis* in the *LP*, and the bodhisattva *bhūmis* of the *Dbh* is a topic of continuing dispute (Sawazaki 2022, 39–45).

seventh bodhisattva *bhūmi*. Thus, the *DZDL* seems to believe that a bodhisattva becomes a “saint” only upon attaining receptivity to the nonproduction of dharmas—one step away from attaining irreversibility.<sup>104</sup>

Besides this scheme, the *DZDL* appears to be consistent in its association of sainthood with receptivity to the nonproduction of dharmas.<sup>105</sup> In a crucial passage about the fixed position of a bodhisattva (*bodhisattva-niyāma*), the text elucidates:

The fixed position of a bodhisattva is [when he acquires] receptivity to the nonproduction of dharmas, [...] the *pratyutpanna-samādhī* [...] and the six Perfections [...], by which he is designated as an irreversible bodhisattva. Furthermore, [by fulfilling such an achievement,] a bodhisattva who has entered this position of the Dharma will not fall back to the class of ordinary people. He should be designated as someone who is in possession of the path [Chn. 道; Lamotte interprets this term as “complete enlightenment” (\**sambodhiprāpta*)]. None of the mundane things that would corrupt his mind can disturb him. He has closed the gates to the three evil destinies (\**durgati*). He falls into the class of bodhisattvas. For the first time, he is born into the family of bodhisattvas (\**bodhisattvakula*). His wisdom has become pure and matured.<sup>106</sup>

This passage not only confirms that the *DZDL* views the attainment of receptivity to the non-production of dharmas as a watershed in the development of a bodhisattva, but that it also explains the implication of transcending the state of ordinary people: here, a bodhisattva goes beyond mundane existence and the evil destinies. In comparison with the *Dbh* and the view of many later exegeses that a bodhisattva becomes a saint when he produces the thought of enlightenment—that is, on the first *bhūmi*<sup>107</sup>—this association of sainthood with the attainment of receptivity seems to suggest that the threshold for being designated as a bodhisattva is relatively low in the *DZDL*. In other words, a bodhisattva, according to the *DZDL*, appears still to be prone to mundane faults and suffering before attaining receptivity to the nonproduction of dharmas. In the *Dbh*, however, a bodhisattva is free from mundane factors when entering the first *bhūmi*—

<sup>104</sup> According to the *DZDL*, the fourth shared *bhūmi* is “*darśanabhūmi* [...] for a bodhisattva, [this *bhūmi*] is the *bhūmi* of irreversibility” (Chn. 見地者[...]於菩薩，則是阿鞞跋致地。T. 1509, 586a10–11).

<sup>105</sup> The text consistently links “surpassing ordinary people” with “acquisition of receptivity to the nonproduction of dharmas.” In a passage that has been cited above, the text asserts that a bodhisattva who has received a prediction but has not obtained the receptivity is the best among ordinary people, i.e., a step away from becoming a saint (T. 1509, 263c21–29; Lamotte 1944–1980, IV: 1805); see my note 7 in this chapter.

<sup>106</sup> Chn. 菩薩位者，無生法忍[...]般舟般三昧[...]六波羅蜜[...]得名阿鞞跋致菩薩。復次，菩薩摩訶薩入是法位中，不復墮凡夫數，名為得道人。一切世間事欲壞其心，不能令動。閉三惡趣門，墮諸菩薩數中，初生菩薩家，智慧清淨成熟。T. 1509, 262a18–b2. I have consulted Lamotte’s rendition and reconstruction of Sanskrit terms; see Lamotte 1944–1980, IV: 1788–1791.

<sup>107</sup> However, in Kamalaśīla’s *Bhāvanākrama* I (8th century), the obtainment of the status of sainthood is still far more advanced than the generation of *bodhicitta* (Williams 2009, 201). This perhaps points to a further raising of the bodhisattva ideal.

long before attaining receptivity. The threshold for bodhisattvas in the *Dbh* should therefore be considered higher than it is in the *DZDL*.

But is the *DZDL*'s stance on the transition from an ordinary person to a saint also representative of the same transition in the *LP*? As a matter of fact, there is scarce evidence directly concerning this issue. Although both the smaller and larger *Prajñāpāramitās* make various references to the state of being a worldly person, the concept receives little elaboration. Only in one instance does the *Aṣṭa* compare the mentality of a stream-enterer with that of an irreversible bodhisattva when it comes to resisting Māra's interference.<sup>108</sup> However, this should be taken only with a grain of salt, since the text also compares someone who has committed the sins of immediate retribution (*ānantarya*) with irreversible bodhisattvas, for both kinds of people are mindful of their condition.<sup>109</sup> In addition, the *Pañca* specifies that ignorant ordinary people cannot grow in the qualities of merit, but a bodhisattva, as soon as he has generated the thought of enlightenment, can grow in the qualities of merit because of his practice in accordance with nonduality.<sup>110</sup> This case, then, seems to distinguish all bodhisattvas, even when they only just generate the thought of enlightenment, from ordinary people—closer to the *Dbh*'s position on this issue.

Lastly, although the *Prajñāpāramitās* are ambiguous about the exact transition from an ordinary person to a saint, the gradual rise of the bodhisattva ideal can still be discerned by comparing the treatment of the correspondence between the four loosely-defined bodhisattva developmental stages and the ten *bhūmis* in different versions of the *LP*. As previous scholars have shown (Kajiyooshi 1954, 246; Yamada 1959, 215–216; Hirakawa 1989a, 416–418), in earlier Chinese translations of the *LP*, e.g., in Kumārajīva's translation, the stage of bodhisattvas who just generate the thought of enlightenment (Chn. 初發意) corresponds to the first *bhūmi*, yet in the First and Second Sections of Xuanzang's *Da banreboluomiduo jing*, a bodhisattva who just

<sup>108</sup> “Subhūti, indeed, just like a stream-enterer (*śrotaāpanna*) does not have doubts or uncertainty over the fruit of entering the stream [when abiding] in his own *bhūmi*—just like this, Subhūti, an irreversible bodhisattva *mahāsattva* does not have doubts or uncertainty [when abiding] in his own bodhisattva *bhūmi*. He does not have a suspicion, and he does not feel dejected about [whether he is abiding] in his own *bhūmi*. He [would] quickly discern the deeds of Māra that occur to him from time to time; he does not become subject to the deeds of Māra that occur to him time to time.” Skt. *tadyathā 'pi nāma Subhūte śrotaāpannaḥ śrotaāpattiḥ svakāyāṃ bhūmau na kāṅkṣati na vicikitsati / evam eva Subhūte 'vinivartanīyo bodhisattvo mahāsattvaḥ svakāyāṃ bodhisattvabhūmau na kāṅkṣati na vicikitsati na cāśya saṃśayo bhavati svakāyāṃ bhūmau nāpy asya saṃśīdanā bhavati / utpannotpannāni ca Mārakarmāṇi kṣipram ev 'ābudhyate na cotpannotpannānāṃ Mārakarmāṇāṃ vaśena gacchati* / Wogihara 1932–1935, II: 688.3–7, 688.14–20. See also Karashima 2011, 319 for parallels.

<sup>109</sup> See Wogihara 1932–1935, II: 688.23–26.

<sup>110</sup> “Subhūti, ignorant or ordinary people do not grow in the qualities of the roots of merit for [they] rely on duality, yet a bodhisattva *mahāsattva* who practices in accordance with nonduality grows in the qualities of the roots of merit after first generating the thought [of enlightenment]; until the generation of a final thought (*paścimaka cittotpāda*), he [still] grows in the qualities of the roots of merit.” Skt. *dvaye nīrītya hi Subhūte sarvabālaprthagjanās te na vivardhate kuśalamūlāir dharmair; bodhisattvo mahāsattvaḥ punar advayena carati tena prathamacittotpādam upādāya kuśalamūlāir dharmair vivardhate, yāvāt paścimakaś cittotpādaḥ kuśalamūlāir dharmair vivardhate*. Kimura 1986–2009, V: 142.8–11. The meaning of “a final thought” is not completely clear to me; it seems to mean that every thought in between a bodhisattva's first thought and his final enlightenment is productive of roots of merit if he practices according to nonduality. This phrase also appears in the *Aṣṭa*, cf. Karashima 2011, 328–329, n. 249.

generates his thought of enlightenment has not entered the first *bhūmi*. As the recensions that Xuanzang translated into Chinese were clearly aware of the *bhūmi* system of the *Dbh* (Takasaki 1967, 12–13), the first *bhūmi* here should also mark the watershed between an ordinary person and a saint. In this way, compared to the version translated by Kumārajīva, in which a bodhisattva enters the first *bhūmi* as soon as he generates the thought of enlightenment, a bodhisattva only becomes a saint when he is more advanced in his spiritual practices in Xuanzang’s translations.<sup>111</sup>

### From Defiled to Pure

Although we would preferably use the transition from ordinary person to saint as a signpost to see how Mahāyāna sūtras perceive the bodhisattva ideal, as most sūtras make no clear reference to this transition period, we need to find similar or related standards.

An unfortunate condition that is generally associated with the state of ordinary people is that they are not free from defilement or being reborn in evil destinies.<sup>112</sup> Although scholars such as Cox have already pointed out that this claim is controversial,<sup>113</sup> it is worthwhile to look at the developmental stage in which a bodhisattva is supposed to get rid of his defilement and will no longer be reborn into an evil destiny.

Not only is the issue of defilement and evil destinies related to the question of the watershed between ordinary people and saints, but these phenomena are also closely associated with karmic obstruction—a topic to which we have devoted much discussion in the previous chapters. Although the exact relationship between defilement and unwholesome karma is rather complicated,<sup>114</sup> falling into evil destinies is also

<sup>111</sup> Haribhadra’s *Ālokā* further provides a correspondence between the four loosely defined developmental stages of a bodhisattva and the *bhūmi* system as taught in the Yogācāra school. In this commentary, the stage of bodhisattvas who “first set out for the path” (*prathama-yāna-samprasthita*) equates to the second preparatory stage in the *Bodhisattvabhūmi*, i.e. the *adhīmuktīcaryā-bhūmi*; and the stage of a bodhisattva who “has been engaged in [bodhisattva] practice” (*caryā-pratipanna*) corresponds to the first to the seventh bodhisattva *bhūmis* of the *Dbh bhūmi* system (Wogihara, 1932–1935, 831.16–25; Sparham, 2006–2012, IV: 175). Then, a bodhisattva who just sets out for the bodhisattva path is still an ordinary person.

<sup>112</sup> Namely, being born in hell or as an animal or as a ghost. The general view on this matter, as summarized by Eltschinger (2009, 175), is as follows: “Provided, once again, that he has not yet gotten rid of those defilements that an ordinary person can eliminate by means of the mundane path of cultivation, the *prthagjana* is first and foremost typified by his erroneous superimposition of ego-related aspects onto the selfless constituents of reality, and by the correlative defilements that make him slave to *samsāra* and suffering.” Lamotte also interprets the following sentence in the *DZDL* in this sense: “If someone has attained the state of *ārya*, he is no longer subject to evil destinies (*\*āpāyika*)” (Chn. 如得賢聖道，永不作惡。T. 1509, 291c15; see Lamotte 1944–1980, IV: 2104 and his notes, *ibid.*, IV: 2104, n. 1).

<sup>113</sup> For various Abhidharmic interpretations on how and when one surpasses evil destinies and defilement, see Cox 1995, 74, n. 1; 225, n. 117; esp. 226, n. 119–220. Also, it is noteworthy that the *Bodhisattvabhūmi* explicitly states that bodhisattvas might also opt for a rebirth in evil destinies in order to save beings from sufferings. This type of rebirth is called “rebirth assuming a corresponding form (*tatsabhāgānuvartinī upapatti*)” (Kragh 2013, 209; for an exposition on this kind of rebirth, see Wogihara 1930–1936, 360.2–15).

<sup>114</sup> According to Greene (2021b, 116, n. 16), “Early Buddhist thought usually sharply distinguishes the ‘mental defilements’ (*kleśa*), the unwholesome mental tendencies of greed, hatred, and delusion, from karma itself. This was in part polemical, as it differentiated Buddhism from rivals such as the Jains, for whom karma was a physical substance, adhering to the soul, whose destruction required painful asceticism. Buddhists, in contrast, claimed that while karma was indeed the ‘seed’ of future rebirth, it would not ripen in the absence of the ‘moisture’ of the mental

commonly held to be a consequence of unwholesome karma that also obstructs a bodhisattva from progressing. In Chapter 4, I argued that the concern of identifying and purifying karmic obstruction was prevalent among bodhisattvas, supplying examples from the *Suvarṇabhāṣottama-sūtra*, the *Samghāṭa-sūtra*, etc. Considering the scope of this issue, a careful examination of defilement and karmic obstruction in relation to the bodhisattva path is certainly beyond our means here. But in a mere limited way, can we discern any pattern by tracing the developmental stages at which a bodhisattva removes himself from defilement or karmic obstruction?

The survey below will show that, on the one hand, a comparison between relatively earlier materials and later ones roughly indicates a trend by which, in later texts, a bodhisattva cleanses his karmic obstruction or defilement at an earlier stage of progress—consistent with the pattern we have observed from the transitional point between ordinary person and saints. On the other hand, considering the complexity of this issue’s treatment within every text and among the large corpus of Mahāyāna scriptures, the pattern is not absolute.

First, a rough pattern can be discerned from texts within the same literary lineages (i.e., within the *Prajñāpāramitās* and within the *Buddhāvataṃsakas*), but with much inconsistency and many issues. In the chapter on the dispositions, marks, and signs of irreversible bodhisattvas, the *Aṣṭa* claims that an irreversible bodhisattva will not be reborn into the three bad destinies.<sup>115</sup> The *Pañca*, however, seems more chaotic regarding this question. On the one hand, the *Pañca* also claims that a newly minted bodhisattva still faces the danger of falling into evil destinies.<sup>116</sup> Paradoxically, on the other hand, the *Pañca* promises that at least there exist some bodhisattvas, even when they have just begun, will not be reborn into bad destinies by following the wholesome

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defilements (craving, aversion, and delusion); hence the painful asceticism needed to purge karma itself could be left alone. Later Buddhist thought did not always make these same sharp distinctions.” For an overview on the distinction between karma and defilement in (both mainstream and Mahāyāna) scholastic traditions, see Mizuno 1974, 15–19.

<sup>115</sup> “Moreover, Subhūti, indeed, an irreversible bodhisattva *mahāsattva* will not fall into evil destinies, nor will he take [the rebirth of] becoming a woman” (Skt. *sa khalu punaḥ Subhūte ‘vinivartanīyo bodhisattvo mahāsattvo nāpāyeṣūpapadyate na ca strībhāvaṃ parigrhṇāti*; Wogihara 1932–1935, II: 667.13–14). For this passage in *Daoxing* and parallel texts, see Karashima 2011, 304. Elsewhere in this chapter, the *Daoxing* re-emphasizes that an irreversible bodhisattva “neither speaks of unlawful matters, nor is he reborn into an evil existence,” but other translations as well as the extant Sanskrit read differently (ibid., 317–318, n. 149), suggesting that this reading, “evil existence,” is perhaps a mistranslation, misreading, corruption, or similar.

<sup>116</sup> “Kauśika, if someone speaks about this Perfection of Wisdom in front of a bodhisattva *mahāsattva* who has newly set forth on the path, he would tremble, feel frightened, have fear of it, reject it, and be turned away from it, he would not have conviction in it. O Kauśika, there is this possibility that this bodhisattva *mahāsattva* who has newly set forth on the path, having heard this profound Perfection of Wisdom, after rejecting it, would accumulate karma that causes his downfall [i.e., into bad destinies]. He would attain the unsurpassable perfect enlightenment only after a long time and with great difficulty.” Skt. *sacet Kauśika nava-yāna-saṃprasthitasya bodhisattvasya mahāsattvasya purata iyaṃ prajñāpāramitā[m] bhāṣyeta uttrasyeta saṃtrasyeta saṃtrāsam āpadyeta pratibādhyeta pratikṣipet nādhimucyeta. Sthānam etat Kauśika vidyate yas sa nava-yāna-saṃprasthito bodhisattvo mahāsattva imāṃ gambhīrāṃ prajñāpāramitāṃ śrutvā pratikṣipya vinipātagāmi-karmopacinuyāt, sa kṛcchreṇa cireṇānuttarāṃ samyaksambodhim abhisambudhyeta*. Kimura 1986–2009, IV:15.22–28; I modified the punctuation. To my knowledge, this passage has no parallel in the *Aṣṭa*.

ways of actions.<sup>117</sup> Moreover, in the chapter on the ten *bhūmis*, the *Pañca* places the complete elimination of defilement on the seventh *bhūmi*, along with the acquisition of receptivity to the nonproduction of dharmas<sup>118</sup>—a treatment, as we will soon see, similar to that of the *Dbh*.

As for the two texts from the *Buddhāvataṃsaka* literature that are most relevant to this study, the texts themselves are crystal clear on this issue, though interpreting them is much more difficult. In the *SB*, a bodhisattva is supposed to become an irreversible bodhisattva in the seventh abode, but to purify his activities of body, speech, and mind only in the next abode (Nattier 2007, 127–128).<sup>119</sup> The *Dbh*, on the other hand, has developed a sophisticated system of different phases of the elimination of unwholesome karma and defilement: although a bodhisattva of the first *bhūmi* has separated himself from ordinary beings and the risks of rebirth into bad destinies,<sup>120</sup> and a bodhisattva of the second *bhūmi* is designated as “stainless” (*vimāla*) for having abstained from various unwholesome ways of actions (*akuśala-karmapatha*),<sup>121</sup> in the first seven

<sup>117</sup> “Śāriputra, there are bodhisattvas *mahāsattvas* who, having generated the first thought of enlightenment, having been steadfast in the Perfection of Giving and the Perfection of Discipline, never succumb to any evil states, bad destinies, or downfalls until they attained the *bhūmi* of irreversibility” (Skt. *santi Śāriputra bodhisattvā mahāsattvā ye prathamacittotpādam upādāya dānapāramitāyām śīlapāramitāyām sthītvā naivaṃ kadācid apāyadurgativinipāteṣūpapadyante yāvad avinivartanīyabhūmim anuprāpnvanti*. Kimura 1986–2009, I: 86.21–23). Similar claims can be found in some Chinese versions of the *LP* (e.g., T. 220 [1], 1028c1–4; *ibid.*, 1039a8–12, etc.), although the extant Sanskrit version of the *Pañca* seems to have no parallels to these passages.

<sup>118</sup> For the passage on eliminating defilement in the *Pañca*, see Kimura 1986–2009, I-2: 99.25–27. In explaining this passage, Gilks (2010, 230) argues, “Since, (1) as we have seen, abandoning all defilements is a prerequisite for entering the fixed condition of a bodhisattva; and (2) from the passage just cited, entering the fixed condition of a bodhisattva is a prerequisite for producing the certitude that dharmas are not produced, by combining these two conclusions, we can now say that any bodhisattva who has produced the certitude that dharmas are not produced must have already gained the knowledge, and eliminated the abandonments, of *śrāvakas* and *pratyekabuddhas*.” Taking this paradox (i.e., bodhisattvas are supposed to be free from downfalls at either the first stage or the seventh) into consideration—if we mean to treat the *Pañca* as a coherent work, which it hardly is from the perspective of its textual history—I tend to interpret that the *Pañca* promises bodhisattvas who have just set forth the elimination of the danger of downfalls under certain conditions: for someone who has faith in any Perfection, they should be free from worries; for those who lack faith and practices, they are not exempted from those bad rebirths. Overall, the *LP* is more ambiguous on this subject than texts such as the *Dbh*.

<sup>119</sup> According to Zhi Qian’s translation, on the eighth *bhūmi*, a bodhisattva should “first, not commit any fault with regard to body, speech, and mind; secondly, he should be completely flawless” (Chn. 一身口意不犯，二一切無瑕疵。T. 281, 450b21–22; for a synoptic edition of Zhi Qian and Lokakṣema’s translations of this passage, see Nattier 2005, 357). In the *Dbh*, however, the sequence of irreversibility and purification is reversed: “[when] a bodhisattva abides on this seventh bodhisattva *bhūmi*, this bodhisattva has successfully purified his body-action by his highest intention (*adhyāśaya*); he has successfully purified his speech-action and mind-action with his highest intention” (Skt. *so ’syāṃ saptamyām bodhisattvabhūmau sthito bodhisattvo ’dhyāśayapariśuddhena kāyakarmaṇā samanvāgato bhavati / adhyāśayapariśuddhena vākkarmaṇā adhyāśayapariśuddhena manaskarmaṇā samanvāgato bhavati* / Kondō 1936, 120.4–6; see also Saerji 2020, 353.12–354.2; see Honda 1968, 205 for an English rendition), but a bodhisattva only becomes irreversible on the eighth *bhūmi*. What the reversal of consequence implies is unclear.

<sup>120</sup> A bodhisattva of the first *bhūmi* should think as follows: “I have distanced myself from the *bhūmi* of ignorant ordinary people [...] I have prevented myself [lit. cut myself off] from falling into any evil states (*apāya*) and bad destinies (*durgati*)” (Skt. *dūribhūto ’smi bālaprthagjanabhūmeḥ / [...] vyavacchinno ’smi sarvāpāyadurgativinipātāt* / Kondō 1936, 17.6–7; for the readings of a manuscript kept in Tibet, which are quite different from Kondō’s edition, see Saerji 2023, 288.20–21; see also Honda 1968, 128–129 for an English translation).

<sup>121</sup> For the ten prescribed good ways of actions (Skt. *karmapatha*; alternatively translated as “courses of actions”) and the corresponding bad actions that one should be free from, see Kondō 1936, 37.14–40.4; for an English translation, see Honda 1968, 144–147.

*bhūmis*, a bodhisattva has not gone beyond faults and defilement (*kleśa-doṣa*); even though he is not defiled by them, he only surpasses them from the eighth *bhūmi*.<sup>122</sup>

Similarly, if we extend our survey to texts beyond the *Prajñāpāramitā* and the *Buddhāvataṃsaka* literature, the big picture suggests that at a relatively early phase of the development of the notion of the bodhisattva career, a bodhisattva would rid himself of defilement and karmic obstruction late in his career. For example, the *SvN* claims that even a bodhisattva of the tenth *bhūmi* could still have remaining karmic obstruction (Dream 75). On the contrary, later exegetical works generally place removing a bodhisattva's karmic obstruction in the preparatory stages.<sup>123</sup> Admittedly, we do not have sufficient evidence to form a consistent pattern. In most instances, we cannot find a clear indication of the stage at which a bodhisattva rids himself of his karmic obstruction or defilement (or performs a confession ritual that helps him to eliminate them).<sup>124</sup> Otherwise, sūtras that do ascribe or prescribe a developmental stage to the purification of this obstruction or defilement have diverse views on it.<sup>125</sup> Further,

<sup>122</sup> In the chapter on the seventh *bhūmi*, the text elaborates on how a bodhisattva gradually rids himself of defilement from the first *bhūmi*: “just like this, sons of the Conqueror, starting from the first *bhūmi*, a bodhisattva, riding on the vehicle of Perfections and roaming about all the worlds, knows the [mundane] faults of defilement (*saṃkleśadoṣa*). But, he is not stained by the faults [of defilement] because he is riding [along] the right path. However, you should not say that he is [advanced] to such an extent that he has surpassed the faults of defilement of all the worlds. Having left behind all the conducts based on exertion (*prayogika-caryā*) in the [first] seven *bhūmis*, he steps onto the eighth *bhūmi* from the seventh *bhūmi*. Then, riding on the purified bodhisattva vehicle and roaming about all the worlds, he knows about the faults of defilement of all the worlds and he is not stained by the faults because he has completely gone beyond the triple worlds” (Skt. *evam eva bho jinaputrā prathamām bhūmim upādāya bodhisattvaḥ pāramitāyānābhīrūḍhaḥ sarvajagad anuvicaran saṃkleśadoṣā[n] prajānāti / na ca tair doṣair lipyate samyagmārgābhīrūḍhatvāt / na ca tāvat samatīkrāntaḥ sarvajagatsaṃkleśadoṣād vaktavyaḥ / saptasu bhūmiṣu sarvaprāyogikacaryāṃ vihāya saptamā bhūmer aṣtamīm bodhisattvabhūmim avakrānto bhavati / tadā parīśuddhabodhisattvayānam abhīrūḍhaḥ sarvajagad anuvicaran sarvajagatsaṃkleśadoṣān prajānāti na ca tair doṣair lipyate samatīkrāntatvāt lokakriyābhyāḥ* / Kondō 1936, 119.10–15; see also Saerji 2020, 352.9–353.5). See also Honda 1968, 204–205 for an English rendition; translations of this passage from the Sanskrit and Chinese texts can also be found in Chun (1993, 359–360, 362–363).

<sup>123</sup> For example, the chapter on “Clearing Away Vile Actions” (Skt. *pāpa-śodhana*) in the *Śikṣ* is meant for bodhisattvas at preparatory stages (see my next footnote). Also, in the *Bodhisattvabhūmi*, a bodhisattva will no longer be born into evil destinies on the first stage of *ārya*. Kragh (2013, 212) has provided a summary of this achievement on the *śuddhādhyaśaya-bhūmi* (i.e., the first *ārya* stage), a higher *bhūmi* than the *adhimuktīcaryā-bhūmi*: “the bodhisattva no longer will be reborn as a result of negative actions in the three bad forms of rebirth (*apāya*, 惡趣, *ngan song*), i.e., rebirth as a hell-being, ghost, or animal, once he has reached the third level of pure exalted conviction (*śuddhādhyaśayabhūmi*, [Jingshengyile di] 淨勝意樂地, *lhag pa 'i bsam pa dag pa 'i sa*) given the degree of merit that has been accumulated at this stage” (for the whole passage, see Wogihara 1930–1936, 367.17–22). Like the *Dbh*, besides the issue of the three bad forms of rebirth, the whole process of “clearance of defilement” is far more complicated; for an in-depth demonstration, see the chart provided by Aramaki (2013, 403).

<sup>124</sup> A brief survey of the *Śikṣ* chapter “Clearing Away Vile Actions” will lead us to this conclusion—almost none of the citations specifies at which developmental stage bodhisattvas should apply themselves to these confession or purification methods. For an English translation of this chapter, see Goodman 2016, 155ff; for the Sanskrit, see Bendall 1902, 158.11ff.

<sup>125</sup> Here, I wish to use two sūtras that we have reviewed in Chapter 4 as examples. In the *Karuṇāpuṇḍarīka-sūtra*, “for a bodhisattva *mahāsattva* who has obtained this *dhāraṇī*, if he has committed five sins of immediate retribution (*ānantarya-karman*), his [sins of immediate retribution will] disappear within [this] lifetime. In his third lifetime, those [remaining; cf. Chn. 餘習, *Dasheng beifentuoli jing*, T. 158, 238b19] karmas [will] perish completely and he [will] step onto the tenth *bhūmi*. If this bodhisattva [who has obtained the *dhāraṇī*] never committed any sins of immediate retribution, all of his other karmic obstructions [will] disappear and he [will] surpass [all the] ten *bhūmis* in his subsequent life” (Skt. *yena bodhisattvena mahāsattveneyam dhāraṇīṃ pratilabdha bhavati tena yadi pañcānantaryāṇi karmāṇy ācīrṇāni bhavati, tasya janmāntareṇa parīkṣayam gacchanti, tṛtīye janmani niravaśeṣam tāni karmāṇi naṣṭāni bhavanti, daśamīm ca bhūmim avakrāmati / yasya tu bodhisattvasya nānantaryāṇi karmāṇi kṛtāni bhavanti tasyānyāni sarvakarmāvaraṇāni parīkṣayam gacchanti, janmaparivartena daśabhūmīḥ samatīkrāmati* / Yamada 1968, II: 39.18–40.5). This sūtra seems to take the elimination of karmic obstruction as

considering the general difficulty of making a chronology of Mahāyāna sūtras, we cannot extract a clear pattern from the varied accounts of the point at which bodhisattvas should cleanse themselves of karmic obstruction and defilement.

Despite the conflicting details,<sup>126</sup> from what we have gathered above, as far as the scriptures on the bodhisattva developmental stages are concerned, the overall picture shows the obvious rise of the bodhisattva ideal.<sup>127</sup> To be more specific, surveying it from the perspective of when a bodhisattva becomes a saint and rids himself of karmic obstruction and defilement, it is clear that, in the earlier strata of Mahāyāna sūtras, a bodhisattva only becomes a saint and rids himself of karmic obstruction when he is close to an advanced achievement such as irreversibility or even enlightenment, while in the later scholarly works, a bodhisattva of the first *bhūmi* is a saint who is free from karmic obstruction. This echoes Sapaṇ's comment on the *SvN* that we discussed at the beginning of Chapter 5: what earlier Mahāyāna sūtras see as a proper scheme of a bodhisattva's progress is too mundane in the eyes of some later scholars. The implication of this elevation of the bodhisattva ideal is that it becomes harder for someone who aspires to reach buddhahood to be recognized (individually or socially) as a bodhisattva of the first *bhūmi*, let alone as an irreversible bodhisattva. Evidently, the *Dbh*—a text that marks a “refined” form of the development of schemes of the bodhisattva career—designates a bodhisattva of the first *bhūmi* both as beyond ordinary people in the spiritual sense as well as “a lord of Jambudvīpa” (*jambudvīpeśvara*; Kondō 1936, 29.10) in the mundane sense. By this standard, a bodhisattva of the first *bhūmi* is far beyond ordinary practitioners.

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both necessary and sufficient for becoming a bodhisattva of the tenth *bhūmi*, although this elimination of karmic obstruction is preconditioned by obtaining the *dhāraṇī* the text recommends, which in turn requires a list of virtues and qualities as prerequisites, including being established in “the fourfold attitudes of the saints,” i.e., *ārya-vaṃśa* (for the meaning of this phrase, see Edgerton 1952, II: 105; note that compared to the similar term *gotra*, which is used to classify practitioners of different conditions, *vaṃśa* rather appears to be about the disciplines or attitudes of a monk), strictly observing the precepts, etc. (Yamada 1968, II: 35.5–38.17). Accordingly, a bodhisattva who could get rid of his karmic obstruction is a bodhisattva of considerable accomplishment, but the specific phase of his development is not mentioned in the text. Yet another sūtra that we have reviewed in Chapter 4—the *Samghāta-sūtra*—provides a slightly different account of this matter. In Chapter 4, we paid attention only to the content and implications of the disturbing dreams that signify the purification of karma. Here, I want to highlight that the text specifies that dreams of karmic obstruction are dreamt by bodhisattvas who have just generated their thought of enlightenment (*prathamacittotpādika*; von Hinüber 2021, 75 §186). This suggests that, according to this sūtra, a bodhisattva should get rid of his karmic obstruction soon after he generates the thought of enlightenment.

<sup>126</sup> The diverse accounts could suggest conflicts and dynamics within the Mahāyāna tradition with respect to this issue. We could even assume that when the scheme of the bodhisattva career established by the *Dbh* became widely accepted, such conflicts were settled—yet considering the complexity of the textual layers of Mahāyāna sūtras, this is merely a hypothesis.

<sup>127</sup> Harrison has also noted that the bodhisattvas depicted in the earliest Chinese translations of Mahāyāna sūtras, i.e., those can be confirmed as translated in the second half of the 2nd century (Harrison 1987a, 68–72), “were certainly not just semi-mythical beings raised on high to receive the adoration of the masses, but real flesh-and-blood people, among whom they counted themselves, who had conceived the *bodhicitta*, the aspiration for awakening, and were pursuing the appropriate course of training either in the monastic context or in the household life” (ibid., 86; see also ibid., 79–80). That is to say, those designated as “bodhisattvas” in relatively early Mahāyāna scriptures resemble the ordinary practitioners of that time.

This elevation of the threshold of the bodhisattva ideal is significant for our study because it explains how curiosity over one's spiritual achievement disappears in relatively later scriptures on the bodhisattva *bhūmis*—when even the first bodhisattva *bhūmi* is completely out of reach for the audience of the texts, they certainly do not concern themselves with confirming or revealing their own position within this scheme of the bodhisattva career. Since this rise in the bodhisattva ideal effectively resolves the issue of revealing and (socially) acknowledging one's spiritual progress—an inherent problem of the bodhisattva path—we may assume that the intention to resolve this great problem was one of the factors that contributed to the exaltation of the bodhisattva ideal.

Until now, we have been seeking a resolution that thoroughly solves the problems caused by the prediction belief—a belief that demands bodhisattvas confirm something given by an external entity and related to their actions in past lives. Even though there are means to internalize this achievement and guarantee it will surely take place despite one's distinct karmic past, nonetheless, the key question is still about its revelation or confirmation. However, as has been elaborated in Chapter 5, the confirmation of prediction and associated spiritual progress in Buddhism is inherently difficult and potentially dangerous. Among the means that can inform a bodhisattva of his spiritual status, on the one hand, signs (*nimittas*) that are gained from visionary experiences such as dreams and meditation involve subjective experiences that are hardly verifiable by others, and this could certainly provoke ubiquitous claims of sainthood;<sup>128</sup> on the other hand, regarding the display of physical marks (*lakṣaṇas*),<sup>129</sup> supernatural powers (*ṛddhi*),<sup>130</sup> and “magic rituals” (e.g., truthful resolves)—although they are easier for

<sup>128</sup> For accounts and punishment of the self-proclaimed “saints” in Chinese Buddhist materials, see Funayama 2019, 58–64.

<sup>129</sup> Famously, buddhas fully possess the so-called thirty-two bodily marks (*dvātriṃśatī-[mahāpuruṣa-]lakṣaṇāni*) and eighty minor marks (*aṣṭī-anuvyañjanāni*). According to the *Bodhisattvabhūmi*, a bodhisattva begins to display these bodily marks from the first bodhisattva *bhūmi* (i.e., *ādhyaśaya-bhūmi*), “one should know that, starting from the *śuddhāśaya-bhūmi*, a matured bodhisattva obtains the above auspicious marks and minor marks, until subsequently [he becomes] increasingly completed in these [marks] until [the time that] he is sitting on the seat of enlightenment” (Skt. *ity etāni lakṣaṇānuvyañjanāni bhadrāṇi śuddhāśayabhūmipraviṣṭo bodhisattvo vipākataḥ pratilabhathe tatas t'ūrdhvam eṣām viśuddhir uttarottarā yāvad bodhimaṇḍaṇiṣadanād veditavyā*. Wogihara 1930–1936, 377.6–9; for a summary of this passage, see Kragh 2013, 214). This seems to imply that, a bodhisattva's physical appearance can also be suggestive of his spiritual progress. As far as I know, there is no similar statement in early Mahāyāna scriptures.

<sup>130</sup> Fiordalis (2008, 19) summarizes the role of miracles (*prātihārya*, which include *ṛddhi*) in the Buddhist context as follows: “Buddhist miracles are exhibitions of techniques connected to the spiritual accomplishments of Buddhas, Arhats and Bodhisattvas, but at the same time, they are expressions of a truth that is not merely technical or mundane, but beyond ordinary conception.” His conclusion concurs with that of his teacher, Gómez (1977, 221), who also briefly mentions the “obvious fondness of many Buddhists for ‘psychic powers’ and ‘wonder-working’ as proofs or fruits of spiritual advancement.” Note that such miracles are distinguished from “marvelous exhibitions [that] are also achievable through the use of magical charms and amulets[,] the possession of which does not require any particular spiritual development” (Fiordalis 2008, 209). For the prerequisites for the acquisition of such magical power, see *ibid.*, 134ff. The *Śrāvakaḥ* also states that “miracles performed by a noble being (*ārya*, *shèngzhě* 聖者, *phags pa*) [change] things in reality, whereas miracles performed by non-liberated persons only appear to transform things in a deceptive manner, like in a magic show” (Kragh 2013, 142; for the Sanskrit, Tibetan, and Chinese texts, see Deleanu 2006, I: 352, II: 406f; II: 442f §3.28.5.3 respectively, see also Deleanu's [*ibid.*, II: 584, n. 205] note for comparable passages). Further, it is important to note that Fiordalis's study only focuses on “the literary qualities of miracle stories” (Fiordalis 2008, 16)—the belief in miracles is unquestionable, but how the miracles are displayed and verified in reality is impossible to know. Records of miracles displayed by monks are

observers to confirm—it is questionable whether the one to be examined can consistently perform or display them in reality. Lastly, if one’s spiritual progress can be assessed by observing his behavior and virtues, it is still necessary for an authority to acknowledge it. As we have discussed, for advanced achievements like future enlightenment, only buddhas can verify it. Therefore, in the face of such extraordinary difficulty in revealing and confirming one’s spiritual progress, as Gilks has observed from his studies on the signs of irreversibility in *Prajñāpāramitā* literature:

[...] comparisons between individuals may be verifiable in the form of examinations (e.g., the Tibetan *dge-bshes* exams), but measuring and comparing spiritual progress is much more difficult, and systems of certification may even break down completely. If, for whatever reason, this happens, then we have seen there are at least two possible solutions: (1) the bar may [be] raised so high that no one can claim membership among the spiritual elite, which seems to be a rather permanent condition since only the elite would have the authority to lower the bar; (2) alternatively (or in addition) the problem can be postponed by formulating a path that extends beyond the current lifetime so that measureable spiritual progress is not presently possible. (Gilks 2010, 313–314)<sup>131</sup>

In this way, in the later tradition, the attainment of a prediction becomes nothing more than a matter of theory or a story. And thus the case is closed.

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amply found in Chinese hagiographies and travelogues, e.g., in the *Datang xiyu ji* 大唐西域記 T. 2087, 886a19–b10, 911c7–9. The miracle tales in hagiographies have been a major focus of those who are interested in Chinese Buddhist literature, most famously in studies by Campamy 2012 and in many papers by Shinohara Koichi, among others. The term “miracles” in the medieval Chinese Buddhist context, however, cannot be equated with *ṛddhi* or *prātihārya* in Indian contexts (for the Chinese terms that are used to denote miracle events, see, for example, Campamy 2012, 2–7), and how to interpret these records is another tricky question.

<sup>131</sup> Gilks (2010, 43) claims that another reason to “raise the threshold for becoming a bodhisattva” is to “[limit] the number of people who could claim to be bodhisattvas and the superior status that this may have entailed in some communities.” This concurs with our suspicion that Mahāyāna scriptures are also deeply concerned with the arrogance of self-proclaimed bodhisattvas.