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A SECTARIAN INTERPRETATION OF THE RISE OF MAHAYANA

Stephen A. Kent

In its formative days, Mahayana Buddhism¹ evoked bitter hostility from significant portions of the *sangha* and laity.² Its doctrinal and ritual innovations, designed to attract monks, nuns, and laypeople to the new religious expression, often had the effect of bringing scorn and derision on those who espoused them. This hostility stemmed from Mahayana's doctrinal positions and social policies which divided the *sangha* into two disputing factions. Doctrinally, Mahayana teachings diminished the importance of Hinayana beliefs³ including the spiritual goals of the *arhats* and *pratyekabuddhas*.⁴ Socially, Mahayana practices restructured the relationship between the *sangha* and the laity by introducing religious practitioners known as 'dharma-preachers' (*dharmabhāṇakas*), and by establishing around them new patterns of financial and material veneration.

Mahayana Buddhism emerged, therefore, as a schism within Buddhist communities, and sociologists theoretically could interpret this schism as a sectarian phenomenon. Typical of a sect is Mahayana's self-justification through divine inspiration, its elitist claims for individual perfection and doctrinal universalism, and its insistence on the primacy of a widespread preaching campaign.

The sources which best reveal this sectarian schism are the numerous Mahayana texts, and among these texts the *Prajñāpāramitā-Ratnagūṇa samcayagāthā*,⁵ the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*,⁶ and the *Saddharma Puṇḍarīka* rank among the earliest.⁷ These texts were written by Mahayanists for other adherents or potential followers, and they contain frequent instructions about the proper doctrinal and behavioral responses to the Hinayana opposition. They also contain descriptions of the prescribed forms of worship in the emerging religious group. By extracting from these early texts the Hinayana attacks, the Mahayana responses, and the new worship prescriptions, and then analysing this material with the help of modern sociological material on sectarianism, this paper will describe the appearance of Mahayana Buddhism as a sectarian phenomenon, and will do so in terms that will be comprehensible to scholars in either Buddhist studies or my own speciality, the social sciences.⁸

While we can determine that Mahayana Buddhism emerged amidst disputes within Hinayana monasteries, we cannot determine with precision what were the first contentious issues. At an early stage, however, the disputes involved issues relating to the spiritual goals of the monks, including the nature of enlightenment and the religious qualities of those who achieved it, as well as the meditational and conceptual methods which the monks practised.⁹ The disputes were quite bitter, and many Hinayanists within the fourfold assembly of monks (*bhikṣus*), nuns (*bhikṣuṇīs*), layment (*upāsakas*), and laywomen (*upāsikās*) were physically and verbally abusive to the Mahayana monks (*AP* III 84: *Sad* 10:180). Physically, some members of the fourfold assembly beat the Mahayanists (*Sad* 10:181, 20:280–1; *Lotus* XIX 357, X 224, see *Sad* 13:205), or banished them from the order. When banished, Mahayanists were prohibited from entering Hinayana monasteries and *stūpas* (*Sad* 10:260; *Lotus* XII 261). Verbally, Hinayanists, especially the *āraṇyakas* (forest dwelling monks) insulted the Mahayanists in a number of ways (see *AP* XXXI 393–4). They accused the Mahayanists, for example, of preaching non-Buddhist scripture which they created out of greed for profit (i.e. monetary contributions), nourishment (i.e. food from begging), and fame (probably as authors and preachers) (*Sad* 13:205–6; *Lotus* XX 259–60; see *Sad* 13 [Skt.] 381).

Mahayanists responded to their detractors, and the responses not only reveal their self-awareness as a distinctive group, but also express attitudes which are common to groups that are developing a sectarian identity. Their detractors are evil and damnable;¹⁰ their own doctrines transcend those of their opponents;¹¹ they are an elite;¹² they isolate themselves socially from the unconvinced;¹³ and they demonstrate forbearance in the face of suffering.¹⁴

Mahayanists' accusations often were as insulting as their enemies' attacks had been. They described their persecutors and critics as 'men of twisted wisdom, [with] hearts sycophantic and crooked, [who] say they have already attained what in fact they had not yet attained. Their hearts [are] full of pride' (*Sad* 13:205; *Lotus* XII 255–6, 259; see *Sad* 2:31), and they are too arrogant to see their own faults (*Sad* 2:32). Their opponents' most serious crime was their maligning of the *dharma*-preachers which, the Mahayanists claimed, was more contemptible than maligning the Buddha himself (*Lotus* X 218; *Sad* 10 [Skt.]:370).¹⁵

What their detractors did not understand, so the Mahayanists argued, was that the *bodhisattva* vehicle¹⁶ of the perfection of wisdom was the 'fruit' of Buddhahood, while the vehicles of the *arhats* and *pratyekabuddhas* simply were the branches, leaves and foliage (*AP* XI 234; *Sad* 2:29). The path of the perfection of wisdom which irreversible *bodhisattvas* followed was one that embraced, assimilated, and transcended the other paths. *Bodhisattvas*, therefore, trained in the path of the *arhats*, but 'not with the idea of making it in any way [their] own' (*AP* XXV 432–3). While *bodhisattvas* might avail themselves

of the trance (*dhyanā*) techniques that the *arhats* and *pratyekabuddhas* used to tame themselves (see *AP XVII* 332),¹⁷ they did so in order to place themselves in Suchness so that 'all the world [and not just themselves] might be helped' (*Rgs XXIX* 1–10; *AP XI* 234–5). It was, however, to the level of *arhats* and *pratyekabuddhas* that the *bodhisattva* fell if he was not well-established in the perfection of wisdom and skill in means (*AP XIV* 285–91; see *Rgs X* 3–4). Clearly the new Mahayana way was superior to the old, or so the Mahayanists wanted new and potential recruits to believe.

For all these reasons, Mahayanists saw themselves as members of an elite group: 'in the world of beings, few are the *Bodhisattvas* who have mounted on this path of perfect wisdom, and who have resolved to know full enlightenment. . . . [F]ew beings only are irreversible to full enlightenment' (*AP XXV* 429–30). Accordingly, early Mahayana texts admonished their followers to avoid contact with non-believers as much as possible (*Sad* 14:209; *Lotus X* 220, *XIII* 263).¹⁸ Such non-believers were 'bad friends' who had 'diminutive wholesome roots' (*AP VIII* 185), and the Buddha himself said that he would not 'dwell in a dwelling contaminated [by the ideas of the *arhats* and *pratyekabuddhas*]' (*AP XXIV* 242–3). Subhūti asserted that 'if it does not even occur to [a *bodhisattva*] that he has kept aloof from the level of Disciples and *pratyekabuddhas*, then he courses in perfect wisdom' (*AP XXVI* 442).

The enmity that early Mahayanists felt for their non-believing colleagues is obvious from numerous passages in their texts, yet in other passages in the same texts the Mahayanists were discouraged from being indecorous to them. While such discouragements were in line with basic Buddhist teachings about 'right views, right thoughts, and right speech' (despite the attacks that Mahayanists wrote in their texts!), they also served important sectarian ends. Counterattacks by sect members against their opponents can be counterproductive to the group for a number of reasons, and it is not unusual for sects to discourage their members from engaging in them. Bitter sectarian responses heighten the ire that others feel toward them, and thereby can increase the amount of hostility and persecution that sects suffer. At the same time such responses dissipate members' energy from goals that are more productive for group aspirations, and may even alienate potential recruits.¹⁹ Finally, the very act of engaging enemies in debates exposes members to perspectives and social pressures that may cause them to critically reexamine their new commitment.²⁰ By 'suffering in silence' the insults and persecutions, sect members strengthen the boundaries between themselves and their opponents. Their refusal to engage in any form of social exchange, including defensive or aggressive retorts, helps keep the sect members in strict separation from their detractors, and thereby helps insulate them from the attacks.

For any number of reasons, therefore, Mahayanists admonished each other to suffer dispassionately, although the fact that they had to encourage each

other to do so suggests that some of them in fact were swapping insults with their opponents. 'When a *bodhisattva* fights with a person belonging to the vehicle of the Disciples, disputes and quarrels with him, abuses and reviles him, feels ill-will and hatred for him,' then Māra becomes 'jubulant' (*AP* XIV:420). When a *bodhisattva* has been offended, he must say to himself, 'I must avoid getting into a rage, and I must make a firm effort in that direction' (*AP* XXIV 422; see *Sad* 14:216; *Lotus* XII 260–1). If he must answer the questions of the disbelievers, he does so by using Mahayana doctrines alone, only mentioning Hinayana claims by refuting them (see *Sad* 14:213–14; 15 [Skt.]: 384–5, 2:34, 2 [Skt.]: 351; *Lotus* XII 268–9, 271).

Putting these and similar responses into a sectarian perspective, early Mahayanists 'isolated' and 'insulated' themselves²¹ from the opposing Hinayanists monks. They isolated themselves socially by avoiding any rooms or dwellings that Hinayanists were in, and likewise refused to converse with them (*AP* XXIV 242–3). When social contact with the Hinayanists was unavoidable, Mahayanists insulated themselves against the effects that it could have. Like other sectarian groups, Mahayanists permitted 'only highly ritualized encounters between members and non-members [which] were organized in such a way as to reinforce communal solidarity.'²² Mahayanists, therefore, were not permitted to debate about Hinayana doctrines, and could refute them only by referring to Mahayana perspectives. In the same vein, Mahayanists preached to Hinayanists, yet did not expect favorable results from their efforts (*Sad* 14:209). Equally insulating and ritualized was the practice, apparently followed by some Mahayana monks, of telling all Hinayanists who approached them that they held no contempt for them since they too were to become *Tathagatas* (i.e. Buddhas). This practice is revealed in a story about a monk, *Sadāparibhūta*, who did this to the Hinayanists, and the reaction to him shows that the activity was a successful insulating technique: 'Why does he, unasked, declare that he feels no contempt for us? Just by doing so he shows contempt for us. He renders himself contemptible by predicting our future destiny to supreme, perfect enlightenment . . .' (*Lotus* XIX 356; see *Sad* 20:280–81).

Mahayanists reacted to Hinayanists' hostility not only by socially and ideologically isolating themselves within the monasteries, but also by proselytizing people who were not members of the fourfold assembly. Said another way, the amount of hostility that early Mahayanists faced in their original monastic communities drove many of them to proselytize laity who were not members of these communities. The *Lotus* (XII 261), for example, illustrates this claim:

16. The Lord himself knows that in the last period there are (to be) wicked monks who do not understand mysterious speech.

17. One will have to bear frowning looks, repeated disavowal (or concealment), expulsion from the monasteries, many and manifold abuses.
18. Yet mindful of the command of the Lord of the world we will in the last period undauntedly proclaim this Sūtra in the midst of the congregation.
19. We will visit towns and villages everywhere, and transmit to those who care for it thine entrusted deposit, O Lord.

Mahayanists verified for themselves, therefore, their innovative and revolutionary 'truths' through preaching and proselytizing activities among the laity. What motivated Mahayanists to undertake such activities was, I suggest, the belief that '*if more and more people can be persuaded that the system of belief is correct, then it must, after all, be correct.*'²³ Early Mahayanists were poorly received by much of the established religious community, so they responded by initiating proselytizing efforts toward laypeople who were not members of the hostile monastic communities (*Sad* 18:258, 13:206; *Lotus* XVII 328–9). Mahayanists did not abandon their efforts to convert other monks, but their proselytizing efforts soon reached into the countryside and affected lay people who were not members of Buddhist monastic communities.

These proselytizing efforts served as the primary method that Mahayana used to build a membership around its doctrines, its texts, and its preachers. An evangelizer who preached in order to gain new converts was known as a *dharma*-preacher, and he attempted to elicit a highly emotional conversion experience among his listeners by having them evoke *bodhicittotpāda* ('the rise of the aspiration for Buddhahood').²⁴

The emotional style and individualistic content of these conversions provide the key for placing early Mahayana's soteriological perspective in a general sectarian context. Like certain other sectarian groups, Mahayana sought to elicit 'a profoundly felt, supernaturally wrought transformation of the self', an 'emotional transformation . . . [that] transcended the evil of the world.' Groups that approach the world in this manner are called conversionist sects,²⁵ and seminal to their religious experience is the belief that individuals exercise their free wills with regard to being saved.²⁶ Early Mahayana, therefore, was a conversionist sect, since its primary 'mission to the world' was to stimulate recruits to freely aspire to the enlightenment of Buddhahood.

In their efforts to bring about this emotional experience, *dharma*-preachers resorted to a technique that many sectarian recruiters use. To their potential recruits they claimed that people could experience the sacred time in which the tradition was born (see *APIX* 203–4), or else could gain personal access to the tradition's sacred personages (*Lotus* X 223, 225, etc.). Although the specific content of these claims depended upon whether the *dharma*-preacher was of a theistic (*Saddharma*)²⁷ or non-theistic tradition (*Aṣṭasāhasrikā*),²⁸ in both cases the preachers evoked the religious past to verify the experiential present and certify the salvific future.²⁹

Given the Indian religious context in which the ideal was to escape from the almost-endless round of rebirths in worldly suffering (*saṃsāra*), it must have been an emotional experience³⁰ for people to realize that they could aspire to, and eventually achieve, release from it. *Dharma*-preachers attempted to evoke just this thought in the hearts of their listeners, but they made the new Mahayana faith even more attractive by using additional recruitment techniques. One of these techniques involved assigning magical properties to the texts and the teaching that they contained. Mahayanists claimed that the perfection of wisdom not only protected its adherents from all sorts of evils in this life and in rebirths, but it also guaranteed eventual Buddhahood. Put simply, *dharma*-preachers portrayed the perfection of wisdom as an amulet—a magical force that warded off evil and brought good (*Lotus* XXI 370–5, XXIV 406–9).³¹ Sects frequently make magical claims of this kind about their doctrines, and these claims entice and attract potential recruits.³²

The *Saddharma* suggests that another sectarian recruitment technique which *dharma*-preachers used was to assert to their listeners that their new teaching subsumed the older Hinayana teachings. Preachers used this assertion as a means to encourage persons to take vows in the Mahayana tradition without feeling that they were contradicting previous vows that they had taken in the Hinayana tradition. Although this technique is not discernable in the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā*, which only claims that *bodhisattvas* assimilated and surpassed Hinayana training (*AP* XXV 433), it is a central claim of the *Saddharma* (*Sad* 8:157, see 13:202, 204; *AP* X 227–8; *Lotus* III 65). Translating this claim into practical terms, people's former vows concerning the path of All-knowledge superseded any others that they might have taken in this life (*Sad* 8:165). Through the experience of *bodhicittotpāda*, or possibly through the supernatural powers and divine contacts of the *dharma*-preachers themselves, people 'rediscovered' their past vows.³³

In support of their claim that former (but forgotten) vows superseded present ones, Mahayanists asserted further that there really was only one path, not two or three.³⁴ 'There are no other vehicles,' the Buddha revealed to Śāriputra, 'there is only the One Buddha Vehicle' of Mahayana (*Sad* 2:32, see ch. 2; *Lotus* II 30–59).³⁵ The Buddha preached that three vehicles to nirvana existed only as an expedient device [*upāya*] to get people out of the 'burning house' of *saṃsāra*. Once beings are 'safely out of the burning house and in a place of safety,' the Buddha then 'gives the Great Vehicle equally to all, not allowing any of them to gain passage into extinction for himself alone, but conveying them all to the extinction of the Thus Come One' (*Sad* 3:63, see ch. 3; see *Lotus* III 72–97). Presented in this way, Mahayana not only subsumed the older Hinayana teachings, but also became the 'necessary and exclusive path' through which all Buddhists gained nirvana. For these reasons, some potential recruits must have seen conversion as exceedingly beneficial, if not inevitable.

Since, according to the *Saddharma*, the Buddha used his 'skill in means' to determine which of the three paths was most appropriate to each individual's efforts to escape *samsāra*, one wonders whether *dharma*-preachers permitted themselves similar discretion. Put another way, did *dharma*-preachers attract new converts by preaching non-Mahayana doctrines, and only teaching the perfection of wisdom after persons had experienced *bodhicittotpāda*? The question is an intriguing one, especially since the *Saddharma* suggests this recruitment technique, in at least one of its later sections (*Sad* 24:308). The *Lotus*, moreover, is clear that deception of this kind occurred:

Viewing these beings to be lowly-disposed and to be startled at the lofty vehicle, the *Bodhisattvas* become disciples and exercise *Pratyekabuddhaship*. By many hundreds of able devices they bring numerous *Bodhisattvas* to full ripeness. . . . They show in their own persons that they are not free from affection, hatred, and infatuation; and on perceiving (other) beings clinging to (heretical) views, *they go so far as to accommodate themselves to these views*. By following such a course [*Bodhisattvas*] skilfully save creatures. . . . (*Lotus* VIII 195–6, my emphasis).

As will other sectarian groups,³⁶ Mahayanists justified these deceptions by claiming that they did them only with the person's salvation in mind. Since they felt that they had the 'true' doctrine, they saw no harm in using 'stealth' (*Lotus* X 216) in order to bring people into the fold.

In addition to probable instances of deception in their recruitment efforts, we know that *dharma*-preachers did not reveal the complete perfection of wisdom teaching to either potential recruits or new converts, pragmatically choosing instead to reveal them gradually. Sectarian groups frequently withhold complicated or controversial doctrines from potential converts while the established members attempt to cultivate personal relationships with them.³⁷ As still another recruitment technique, Mahayanists solicited persons through the emotional experience of raising the thought of enlightenment, and only later revealed to them the more complicated metaphysical teachings. Such difficult doctrines as 'emptiness' and 'the non-existence of all *dharma*s,' 'should not be taught or expounded upon in front of a *bodhisattva* who is newly set out in the vehicle,' or at least not until he 'is propped up by a good friend' (*AP* VI 139). If difficult doctrines could not be revealed to new *bodhisattvas*, then they certainly could not have been mentioned during the recruitment efforts which had attracted them.

Putting the recruitment process in sectarian perspective, *dharma*-preachers offered incentives to potential recruits (i.e. access to sacred time and sacred personages, magical protection, and the promise of the Buddha's highest teaching) that had little or no necessary relation to the metaphysical content of the new doctrines themselves. As often happens during the proselytizing efforts of a conversionist group, the membership incentives for potential converts differ from the group's particular beliefs. Only after people have

emotionally committed themselves to the group do they discover that they must learn a particular set of doctrines to which they also must agree. In short, new recruits quickly learn that the group expects them to couple their emotional commitment with a doctrinal one. Reacting to this requirement, some converts drop out soon after their emotional conversion,³⁸ while those who remain often have the unintended effect of modifying the group's doctrines while they are being trained in them.

Both the loss of recruits and the change in doctrines occurred in early Mahayana Buddhism. While the *dharm*a-preachers' use of incentives benefitted their recruitment campaigns, it resulted in inadequate resocialization and training endeavors, and the movement's ideal of religious virtuosi changed accordingly. This change in the movement's ideal took place as the Mahayanists shifted their conversion efforts away from the monks and to the spiritually untrained townspeople and villagers of the countryside. Similarly, many of the devoted Buddhists to whom they now preached were illiterates whose practice of the faith in large part involved *stupa* and relic worship and financial or material support to the *samgha*. An important portion of the Buddhist population, however, was literate, and Mahayanists realized that these people could play an important role as converts in the developing movement. Because they could read and write, these 'sons and daughters of good families' (see *AP* IX 201, 202) would be able to copy texts for the preachers' use while at the same time studying them under the teachers' guidance.³⁹

After experiencing *bodhicittotpāda*, however, many sons and daughters of good families did not conform to the group's expectations of them. Many undertook their doctrinal studies with little enthusiasm, refused to accept the new teachings (*AP* VII 178–9, X 226, XI 239; *Rgs* VII 6), or else accepted them for a while, only to reject them later (*AP* XI 233–4, 239–40, 245; V 112–13).⁴⁰ Even the *bodhisattvas* who believed that they coursed in the perfection of wisdom caused serious problems for the group. Through their conceit and pride, they set themselves above their fellow *bodhisattvas* (*Rgs* XXI 1–3; *AP* XXI 385–91), thereby creating tensions among members. As if all of these problems were not enough, disharmony also existed between some pupils and their teachers (*AP* XI 243–8), and these problems were exacerbated by the teachers' lack of access to texts (*AP* XI 244).

Confronted with the problems that plagued the new movement, Mahayanists were to develop explanations which deflected blame from themselves. Like members of other struggling sectarian groups, Mahayanists accounted for their difficulties by asserting that a force of cosmic evil was behind them. They spoke of their problems in terms of 'good versus evil,' and this 'metaphysical dualism' is 'common to small bounded [sectarian] communities.'⁴¹ For the Mahayanists, the particular cosmological force of evil was *Māra*, and at root he was responsible for the problems that the new *bodhisattvas* had with regard to

the perfection of wisdom teaching (*AP* XIV 285–6, XI 234–7, 239–43, XXIV 417). Moreover, Māra was to blame for those *bodhisattvas* whose pride allowed them to feel superior to others. He was especially bothered, they said, over the development of fellowship within the *bodhisattva* community, and he went to great lengths in order to plant and breed damaging deceit among its members (*AP* XXI 385–9, 391–2, 418; *Rgs* XXI 1–2; see *AP* XXI 418).

In the same vein, Māra was blamed for all forms of discord between pupils and their teachers. He caused all the strains in pedagogic relationships that ‘wreck the chances of co-operation between teacher and pupil’ (*AP* XI 243), including sloth, greed, preoccupation, etc. As well, the practical problems that arose in teaching, such as the lack of *sūtra*-copies and long geographical distances between students and teachers, were his fault (*AP* XI 243–5, 246–8). Apparently Mahayanists felt that Māra was painfully successful at these subversive activities, since the only solution that they could offer to these very real problems was the weak admonition that they ‘should be recognized as Māra’s deeds, and one should try to avoid them’ (*AP* XI 248).

The Mahayanists’ most bitter charges involving the meddling of Māra were levelled against the *bodhisattvas* who attempted to dissuade others from adopting the perfection of wisdom. These charges must have been designed to deter the ‘renegades’ from further acts of subversion, and they reveal quite strikingly the amount of ill-will that existed toward these fellow *bodhisattvas* who actively rejected the movement (*AP* VII 179–82; see *Lotus* II 59). Few other attacks in the *Ratnagūṇa*, the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā*, the *Saddharma*, or the *Lotus* equal these in ferocity. Seen within a sectarian context, Mahayanists’ hatred of renegades and dissenters is a typical response, since nothing threatens sect-members as much as ‘the enemy within.’⁴² Hostility from outsiders is expected (see *AP* IX 202), but hostility from insiders is unexpected, and is a potentially dangerous blow to group cohesion.

Given the uncertain future of the new converts’ relationship to the movement, Mahayanists did not consider these *bodhisattvas* as full members. Like other sectarian movements, Mahayanists thought of its new recruits as novices (*Lotus* XIII 264),⁴³ and described them as ‘*bodhisattvas* who have recently launched their thoughts,’ ‘*bodhisattvas* who have set out on a new course,’ or ‘*bodhisattvas* who have newly set out in the vehicle’ (*Sad* 2:24 and n.; *Lotus* X 222; *AP* I 17, VI 139, XIII 282). It is not clear how long converts remained as novices, but the tone of certain sections of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā* suggest that, under ideal conditions, they remained so at least until they had completed making a copy of the text (*AP* 221; *Lotus* X 216; see *AP* XI 232–3). Requiring that novices perform such a task would not only have given the new *bodhisattvas* an opportunity to study the teachings, but also it would have given them texts of their own that they could memorize and eventually preach as *dharma*-preachers themselves. Furthermore, such a time-consuming act would have served as

proof of the converts' deep commitment to the group, and provided a lengthy period of time in which the group would have resocialized and trained them.

The resocialization and training was carried out most effectively when new *bodhisattvas* developed friendships with older ones (AP 292–3). 'Good friends' were defined as those *bodhisattvas* 'who have set out for the best enlightenment' (Rgs XXII 2), and therefore were the new *bodhisattvas*' 'spiritual teachers' (Rgs XV 1–2) who helped them to spiritually 'mature' (Rgs II 13). As did early Mahayana, many sects emphasize the importance of friendship in the resocialization and training process, and it is fair to say that 'the final conversion [is] coming to accept the opinions of one's friends.'⁴⁴ In this vein the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā* states that a novice's 'good friends are those who instruct and admonish him in perfect wisdom, and who expound to him its meaning. . . . It is thus a *Bodhisattva* who is just beginning should gradually, through the good friends, enter into perfect wisdom' (AP XV 292–3).

With patience, fortitude, and good friends, many aspirants finally became *bodhisattvas* who never would fall to the level of either an *Arhat* or *Pratyekabuddha* (AP XIV 285–91), nor ever be connected to either group (AP XV 300). They became, therefore, 'irreversible' to full enlightenment (see AP XX 379–84; Rgs XX 22–4), and, as 'the very cream of all beings' (AP XXV 426), were 'morally perfect' (AP X 227).

The most distinguishing fact about many of the irreversible *bodhisattvas* was that they were proselytizers of perfection of wisdom doctrines. By adjusting the traditional doctrine of 'merit'⁴⁵ to suit their own circumstances, early Mahayanists asserted that *bodhisattvas* who preached the perfection of wisdom received merit far in excess of those who did not (Sad 17: 254). The *Aṣṭasāhasrikā* put forth a hierarchy of merit for the *bodhisattvas*, the lowest level of which included those *bodhisattvas* who simply honored the perfection of wisdom. More meritorious were the *bodhisattvas* who shared a copy of the perfection of wisdom with others, and higher still were the *bodhisattvas* who gave away copies of the text. *Bodhisattvas* who received the highest merit were those who expounded upon the texts when they gave them away (AP V 102–12, IX 201; Rgs XVIII 4; Lotus XVII 332; see Sad 18: 260–1).

If this hierarchy of merit reflected the internal status within the early Mahayana movement,⁴⁶ then those *bodhisattvas* with the highest status not only were the proselytizers of the faith, but also were teachers of the novice *bodhisattvas* who made copies of the texts for purposes of dispersal. For the *bodhisattvas* with the highest status, therefore, propagating the doctrine was intimately connected with other recruitment and training activities which were essential for the life of the movement. Sometimes these activities placed conflicting demands on the preaching *bodhisattvas*. As I mentioned earlier, for example, *bodhisattvas* believed that if they preached such basic perfection of wisdom doctrines as 'emptiness' or 'the impermanence of all *dharma*s,' then

their recruitment efforts would suffer. They resolved this conflict by avoiding these doctrines during their recruitment and early training activities, while attempting to attract and keep converts through the emotional impact of the *bodhicittotpāda* experience and through claims of magical protection for the devout.

Similarly, a conflict arose between the *dharma*-preachers' recruitment demands and their religious ideals. Since the earliest preachers were disaffected monks who left the monasteries, they had firsthand knowledge of Hinayana texts and spiritual exercises (AP XVIII 332, XXV 432–3). As they recruited from numerous towns and villages, however, they gained followers who lacked background in either the Hinayana textual tradition or monastic meditational practices. As some of these recruits matured and became preachers in their own right, Mahayana was forced to modify its ideal of the spiritual qualities which it claimed its *bodhisattvas* possessed. The modification is represented, I believe, in the contrasting figures of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā*'s extempore *dharma*-preacher, Subhūti, and the *Saddharma*'s and *Lotus*'s text-carrying *dharma*-preachers. Both represented the ideal embodiments of the *dharma*-preachers in their respective texts, yet both differ in important and revealing ways.

MacQueen has analysed the different forms of *dharma*-preachers' inspired speech (*pratibhāna*) in the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā* and the *Saddharma*.⁴⁷ He demonstrated that Subhūti 'is one who has personally realized the emptiness of things, and who, because this perception is continually open to him, can speak with complete freedom and fluency on any occasion, revealing the true nature of the world to others directly from his own vision.'⁴⁸ His own vision is 'a state of constant clarity attained through ascetical, moral, and meditational practice.'⁴⁹

It is precisely this kind of ascetical, moral, and meditational practice that the lay converts lacked, so that by the time of the *Saddharma*, the *dharma*-preacher is no longer portrayed as a person who has constant clarity. In contrast, he is 'primarily one who achieves communion with divine persons [i.e. the Buddha, *devas*, and supernatural beings], for whom he then acts as a channel and messenger' (see *Lotus* X 223).⁵⁰ This evolution of the Mahayana ideal of the *dharma*-preacher has its origin, I suggest, in the necessary recruitment shift away from the *saṃgha* and toward the laity of the countryside, villages, and towns. The ideal expressed in the *Saddharma* of a *dharma*-preacher who occasionally 'possess[es] moments of vision, ecstasy, and inspiration'⁵¹ (see *Lotus* X 225, XIII 278–9) reflects the growing influence of the laity who lacked monastic spiritual training but were rooted in many popular beliefs about the gods.⁵² Moreover, these laity-turned-*dharma*-preachers joined the group in part because of its magical claims that the gods protected the devotees, and as a result the gods continued to play an important, catalytic role in their reception of inspired speech.

In sectarian terms, there occurred a 'clericalization of lay members'⁵³ (*AP* XVII 323) as householders became *dharma*-preachers⁵⁴ and laypeople 'gained' intimate contact with the Buddha and other supernatural beings without recourse to monastic training. By seeing the second stage of early Mahayana as a revolutionary restructuring of the social relationships between monks and laymen,⁵⁵ we are able to understand why Hinayanists consistently refused to write responses to the new movement. Their literary silence was one of absolute scorn.

Additional problems arose for preachers in their efforts to spread the doctrine while attempting to train novices. When, for instance, the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā* bemoans the problem that teachers frequently were geographically separated from their students (*AP* XI 243–4), it undoubtedly is revealing a real problem for the early movement. How indeed could preachers travel and preach their doctrines, and still train the students that they recruited? The solution that Mahayana preachers evolved will receive closer attention toward the end of this paper, but for now suffice it to say that at least some of them reduced their travelling in favour of more permanent settings in cities and towns (see *AP* XXX 506–8).⁵⁶ Once settled, laypeople came to them in order to hear their sermons, and students stayed with them in order to copy and study the texts. Again, the trend seen here in early Mahayana (that of preachers confining their travelling in order to improve their teaching,) is a common one among conversionist sects, since sooner or later groups realize that their future lies partly in their ability to carefully train others in their doctrines.⁵⁷

Especially after they settled, preachers had to reconcile their preaching and teaching activities with efforts to procure financial and material support for themselves, and possibly for their attendants and students.⁵⁸ The preachers' solution to the problem of procuring funds had important consequences for the nature of the early movement. Put simply, their solution was to establish themselves as figures who were worthy of veneration, and thereby demand that students and other interested laity give them honorific gifts. With this in mind, we must view the *dharma*-preachers' frequent solicitations to 'sons and daughters of good families' (see *AP* V 105, IX 201–2, etc.)⁵⁹ as fund-raising endeavors. In addition to the fact that these people most likely were literate (as I have argued earlier), they also had financial and material resources at their disposal which they could direct to the *dharma*-preachers. The *dharma*-preachers themselves realized that the recruits could serve as a major source of revenue, and therefore instructed that 'as householders [*bodhisattvas*] remain constantly unattached to their entire property' (*Rgs* XVIII 5). 'By renouncing everything,' a later addition to the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā* declares, '*Bodhisattvas* procured a claim to full enlightenment' (*AP* XXXI 519–20).⁶⁰ As is the case with many sectarian conversions, much of the renounced property was given directly to the preachers (*AP* XXXI 519, see XXX 501, 504, 507–8).⁶¹

Certainly by the time that late sections of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā* were composed, *dharma*-preachers were being financially honored and spiritually venerated. In part, Mahayana justified and encouraged the 'cult of the *dharma*-preacher' as an extension of the traditional idea that one gained merit by giving gifts to religious practitioners⁶² (see *Rgs* VI 1, XXXI 9–18). In addition, the laity venerated *dharma*-preachers for their embodiment of the perfection of wisdom. The preachers owned copies of perfection of wisdom texts (probably ones that they or their novices copied), they memorized the texts' contents, and through extemporaneous speech they communicated the same truth that was written in them.⁶³

In a general sense, *dharma*-preachers were what Max Weber called charismatic figures—'holders of specific gifts of the body and spirit [which were] believed to be supernatural [and] not accessible to everybody.'⁶⁴ Figures such as these, Weber explained, receive financial and material support from their audiences: 'individual patrons provide the necessary means for charismatic structures; or those to whom the charisma is addressed provide honorific gifts, donations, or other voluntary contributions.'⁶⁵

In accordance with this description of charismatic figures, *dharma*-preachers received numerous and expensive honorific gifts from lay devotees. Because of a *dharma*-preachers' intimate relationship to the perfection of wisdom text, 'living beings shall desire to see him as they would aspire to see a sage or saint,' (*Sad* 14:222, 17:256). Part of the veneration ritual involved circumambulating the preacher three times from left to right (*Lotus* XXV 424–5), and some persons paid homage to *dharma*-preachers by mutilating themselves (*AP* XXX 498, XXXI 522–3; see *Lotus* I 12, XXII 378–80, 384–5).

Laymen bestowed special veneration of this kind, however, only after *dharma*-preachers became book-carriers. These books were objects that many laymen believed to be supernaturally potent, and therefore preachers who owned them were distinctive among the many *Śramaṇas* of the day. The earliest *dharma*-preachers, who were not book carriers, were indistinguishable from other red-robed Buddhists (see *Lotus* XIII 269), and they probably received no more gifts than did Hinayana monks. Hence, in the *Ratnagūṇa* and the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā*, the earliest *bodhisattva*-preachers like Subhūti are not venerated by people, but by the gods and Buddhas (*Rgs* XXVII 1; *AP* II 41–2).⁶⁶ Only the possession of the supernaturally powerful texts made Mahayana preachers distinctive, and the 'cult of the preacher' formalized the laity's efforts to venerate the persons who owned and espoused them.

The earliest style of *dharma*-preachers, represented by Subhūti in the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā*, apparently did not receive lay-veneration. These preachers were monks who had achieved clarity of mind through meditation, and this attainment allowed them to debate and discourse on the perfection of wisdom doctrines without relying on texts.⁶⁷ In other words, these *dharma*-preachers

practised an exclusively oral form of discourse on *Dharma* (*dharmaparyāya*), which, as Schopen has indicated,⁶⁸ was not dependent on a written document.⁶⁹

In contrast to the earliest *dharm*a-preachers, the second style of *dharm*a-preachers did not have monastic and meditational training. Lacking the clarity of mind that, presumably, meditational training provided, these preachers had to base their charisma largely on their intimate connection with the texts and the teachings which they contained. These preachers were itinerants, either of household status or of renunciate status from the household (*Sad* 14: 217) who travelled from villages to towns reciting and expounding the text that they carried on their shoulders.⁷⁰

It was during this second stage of Mahayana preaching that the cult of the book emerged.⁷¹ As the *sūtra* itself became all-important, its possessors were venerated as actual embodiments of its teaching. Furthermore, new forms of meditation developed among preaching householders who were untrained in monastic discipline. Rather than 'keeping the *Dharma* in mind'⁷² through inner concentration, these new *dharm*a-preachers meditated by repeating the text, keeping the text in mind, or writing its contents. 'It may be that this externalized practice was arrived at via the technique of repeating short passages of the *sūtra* as a kind of mantra,'⁷³ or, I might add, via study and memorization exercises.

The transition in Mahayana from the *dharm*a-preachers whose minds were constantly clear to preachers who depended upon a text was crucial for the movement. In sectarian terms, the transition involved the 'routinization of charisma'—the stabilization of the movement's charismatic source into a form that was socially transmittable. Once it was socially transmittable, 'a stable community of disciples' could be organized around it.⁷⁴ No longer was the perfection of wisdom located solely in the clear minds of a few monastically trained but disaffected monks. Now the perfection of wisdom was located in 'an objective, transferrable entity'—a text or book—that could be passed on through magical rituals,⁷⁵ and the preacher necessarily based his charismatic claims on his intimacy with the document and his magical possession of its powers.

As the perfection of wisdom became located in a book, pressures increased on the itinerant preachers to localize their proselytizing in order to train others in its contents and meaning. *Dharma*-preachers, therefore, began to settle, and the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā* provides a description (albeit exaggerated) of one such settled preacher. The description of the preacher, whose name was Dharmodgata, reveals the growing connection between the cult of the preacher and the cult of the book (*AP* 488–9, 506–8; see *Lotus* XIII 269–70). The settled *dharm*a-preacher built an enclosure for the book, and he based his charismatic claim not only on his unique possession of the book's teaching, but also on his ability to dispense its teaching to worthy students and interested audiences. More-

over, pilgrims venerated him as well as the text itself, and he was considered by them to be its very embodiment.

Much more than this, however, is revealed about the early development of Mahayana in the long description of Dharmodgata. It seems, for instance, that early Mahayana developed a definition of 'monk' that was quite different from the Hinayana tradition. Dharmodgata was called a monk (*AP* XXX 483) even though he lived in a mansion with a large retinue of women. In addition to his living conditions, the text says that 'he diverts, enjoys, and amuses himself, [and] feels and tastes the five kinds of sense-pleasure' (*AP* XXX 487–88). Apparently because he lived like a wealthy householder some people did not accept him as a monk, since the text includes an apologetic that blames Māra for causing doubt about the propriety of his lifestyle (*AP* XXX 483).

This apology indicates that Mahayana attempted to develop among the laity a conception of a Mahayana 'monk' that included non-ascetic household preachers. These non-ascetic preachers, moreover, practised meditational forms that in some ways borrowed from the Hinayana tradition, but in at least one important way departed from it. From the Hinayana tradition, the preachers borrowed the conception of the five superknowledges.⁷⁶ What was new, however, was their meditation on *dhāranīs* (magical formulas or talismans), which they probably performed as mantra yoga exercises. These exercises conceived of *Dharma* as sound (*śabda*), as did the meditations in parts of the *Saddharma* (*Sad* 24:303–26; *Lotus* XVI 311, see 314, XXVI 433–5).⁷⁷ The *Aśtasāhasrikā* says that 'the holy *Bodhisattva* Dharmodgata has received the *dhāranīs*, [and] he possesses the five superknowledges' (*AP* XXX 510–11). Furthermore, when he described the 'perfect body of the Buddhas,' he did so by comparing it to the 'sound of boogharp' (*Ap* XXXI 515–16). At this stage, therefore, the irreversible *bodhisattvas'* training not only included copying and memorizing the text, but also included the acquisition of its magical incantations.

In theorizing about magical claims for charismatic objects, Weber has indicated that usually these are made by sects which believe that charisma can be ritually transferred from one person to another.⁷⁸ These magical claims bestow the possessor of the charismatic object with a supernatural power that, as a consequence of his special training and occult skills, only he can control and pass on. Weber's sectarian description of the magical basis for charisma appropriately describes this late stage of Mahayana development, since the *dharma*-preacher had the sole claim to the content of the perfection of wisdom text once the document was sealed in a box. Only he knew its full contents, and only he could magically dispense it to others.

As we can see, early Mahayana was developing roles, texts, and cultic institutions that rivaled Hinayana Buddhism. It revolutionized the role of the laity, and offered enlightenment to householders who trained in the perfection

of wisdom doctrines. It borrowed certain meditational concepts from Hinayana, but developed new, and in some cases magical, techniques on its own. It established the *dharma*-preachers as objects of veneration, and linked the preachers' charisma to another innovation, the cult of the book.

The cult of the book was designed to supersede Hinayanists' worship of relics, *stūpas*, and other forms of Buddha-veneration,⁷⁹ and Mahayanists had to present the new cultic form in such a way as to attract Hinayana laypeople to it. In the early days of their efforts to establish the primacy of the cult of the book, Mahayanists were acutely aware of their new cult's inferior status among the laity (*AP* III 58–9).⁸⁰ They attempted to attract more laity by claiming that the merit which one accrued through the new form of cult-worship far acceded the merit gained through traditional *stūpa* or relic worship (*AP* IV 95–6; *Lotus* X 220; *Rgs* III 2–4, IV 17).⁸¹

By the time of the *Saddharma*, however, Mahayanists realized that they could recruit more people into their form of cultic worship by allowing their devotees to practise the older forms of worship. Thus, Mahayana laypeople would participate in *stūpa* or relic worship, while telling Hinayana devotees that the new book veneration offered superior merit. Mahayanists, therefore, occasionally encouraged laity to 'humbly revere . . . the *stūpa*-shrines' (*Sad* 17: 256; see 6: 128), but they gave these instructions simply to further their recruitment aims.⁸² Nonetheless, early Mahayana did not place the same demand for total commitment on the laity that it placed upon its irreversible *bodhisattvas*.

At least on the popular level, people could, and probably did, participate in at least four forms of Buddhist devotion in addition to *samgha* support: Hinayana relic worship, Hinayana *stūpa* worship, Mahayana book worship, and Mahayana preacher veneration.⁸³ In sociological terms, Buddhist devotees practiced dual membership in Hinayana and Mahayana, and such a membership pattern occurs among conversionist sects that must recruit people from existing religious institutions.⁸⁴ New competing institutions allow dual membership policies in part because they need access to potential recruits in the older, more established groups. This was the case with early Mahayana, and it seems probable that its conversionist activities, as well as its doctrinal and cultic innovations, were factors that led to its members' exclusion from some of the Hinayana *stūpa*-sites (*Sad* 10: 206), and eventually to a decisive rift between the two traditions.

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NOTES

- 1 I use the term 'Mahayana' in a general sense, meaning 'that form of Buddhism in which each *sūtra* "present[ed] itself as a self-contained rival to the entire *Tripitaka* (the alleged sermons of the Buddha concerning doctrine and monastic conduct, and the earliest systemizations of doctrines by his disciples)"', Leon Hurvitz, trans. and ed., *Scripture of the Lotus Blossom of the Fine Dharma*, New York, Columbia University Press 1976, p. xvi (his emphasis). While this definition may not adequately describe later developments in the Northern tradition of Buddhism, it is appropriate for the early period with which I am concerned.
- 2 The terms 'laity' and 'laypeople' can mean: (1) Men (*upāsakas*) and women (*upāsikās*) who had taken particular Buddhist vows of purity and proper behaviour and participated in certain rites and ceremonies. They, along with the monks and nuns, comprised the fourfold Buddhist assemblies, and they supplied the monks and nuns with the basic necessities of life. (2) People who venerated Buddhist relic shrines and *stūpas*, but who also probably worshipped Hindu deities. These people were members of the Buddhist community, but not of the fourfold assembly. (3) Non-Buddhists who did not belong to other monastic or mendicant orders. The context in which these terms appear should make their particular meanings clear. Especially with regard to the first of these definitions, see Edward Conze, *Buddhism: Its Essence and Development*, 1951 rpt., New York, Harper and Row 1975, pp. 85–88; and N. Dutt, 'Place of Laity in Early Buddhism,' *The Indian Historical Quarterly* XXI no. 3 (1945), pp. 164–165.
- 3 By 'Hinayana' I mean that form of Buddhism whose schools believed themselves to be following the *Tripitaka*. As well, the terms 'tradition' and 'traditional' refer to the Hinayana path.
- 4 The Mahayana texts upon which this study is based do not distinguish between *arhats* and *pratyekabuddhas*, but differences probably existed in the way that each group trained for enlightenment. Generally speaking, the *arhats* (sometimes called *Śrāvakas* or Disciples) trained by attempting to follow the Buddha's teaching as recorded in the traditional scriptures, especially those teachings regarding the eightfold path. See T. W. Rhys Davids, 'Arhat,' *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics* I, 1918 rpt., Edinburgh, T & T Clark 1974, pp. 774–775; I. B. Horner, *The Early Buddhist Theory of Man Perfected: A Study of the Aran*, London, William and Norgate, Ltd. 1936. *Pratyekabuddhas*, in contrast, discovered for themselves the 'Truth' of Buddhism, without benefit of scriptures or teachers, usually by meditating on the doctrine of 'dependent origination' (*pratitya samutpāda*). See L. de la Vallée Poussin, 'Pratyekabuddha,' in *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics* X, ed. James Hastings, 1918 rpt., Edinburgh, T & T Clark 1974, pp. 152–154. In neither case, however, were these religious practitioners obligated to strive for the enlightenment of others, nor were their own enlightenments contingent upon the achievements of others.
- 5 The *Prajñāpāramitā Ratnagūṇa-samcayagāthā* (for the citation purposes *Rgs*) has been translated in Edward Conze, *The Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Lines and Its Verse Summary*, Bolinas, California, Four Seasons Foundation 1975, pp. 8–73. In citations, I give the chapter and Sanskrit verse numbers of the English translation. For a discussion of dating the *Ratnagūṇa*, see Conze, *ibid.*, pp. ix–xi.
- 6 The *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā* (for citation purposes *AP*) has been translated in Conze, *ibid.*, pp. 77–300. In citations, I give the chapter number of the English translation, followed by the Sanskrit verse numbers which occur in square brackets throughout the translation. For a discussion of the approximate dating of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā*, see Conze, *ibid.*, pp. xi–xii, and *Thirty Years*, pp. 168–84.

- 7 I use three translations of the *Saddharma*. Most citations are from Hurvitz's translation from the Chinese (for citation purposes *Sad*), which was based upon Kumārajīva's Chinese translation from the Sanskrit in 406 C.E. (Hurvitz, *Scripture of the Lotus Blossom*, p. ix). In the citations, I give the English chapter followed by the English page number. In his footnotes, Hurvitz has translated both the interesting and the variant readings from the Sanskrit text, and I distinguish them from the Chinese by putting the abbreviation 'Skt.' in square brackets after the chapter number. I also cite Kern's translation from the Sanskrit (for citation purposes *Lotus*) for which I give the chapter number of the English translation, followed by the English paper number. H. Kern, *Saddharma Pundarika or The Lotus of the True Law*, Sacred Books of the East XXI, 1884 rpt., New York, Dover 1963.
- 8 Whenever possible, I cite sectarian sources that are standard works in the social sciences. In a few instances, however, I believe that the point is best made by citing appropriate references to the sectarian group that I know best, the early English Quakers.
- 9 Conze's analysis of the first two chapters of the *Ratnagunasamcayagāthā*, a text 'which may well go back to 100 B.C.', provides clues about the probable content of the first contentious issues that existed between the earliest Mahayanists and their Hinayana counterparts. See Edward Conze, *Thirty Years of Buddhist Studies*, Oxford, Bruno Cassirer, 1967, pp. 124–30.
- 10 Hugh Barbour, *The Quakers in Puritan England*, New Haven, Yale University Press 1964, ch. 5.
- 11 Bryan R. Wilson, *Religious Sects: A Sociological Study*, Toronto, World History Library 1970, p. 34.
- 12 Ibid., pp. 26–27, 31.
- 13 Bryan R. Wilson, 'An Analysis of Sect Development,' *American Sociological Review* 24 (1959), pp. 10–11.
- 14 See M. G. F. Bitterman, 'The early Quaker literature of defense', *Church History* xlii (1973); and Barbour, *The Quakers*, ch. 8.
- 15 For the presumed fate of Mahayana's opponents in both former and present times, see *Sad* 20:282, 28:336; *Rgs* VII 6, and *Lotus* XIX 359–60.
- 16 The term '*bodhisattva*' had a long history prior to Mahayana. Traditionally, it meant 'a Buddha-to-be [or] one who wishes to become a Buddha. . . . For all Buddhists each Buddha had been, for a long time before his enlightenment, a *Bodhisattva*' (Conze, *Buddhism*, p. 125). Mahayanists expanded the term to mean 'one who aims at the acquisition of *bodhi* [supreme Wisdom] and *buddhajñāna* (Buddha-knowledge)' which he does 'for the welfare and happiness of many beings, both men and *devas*'. Har Dayal, *The Bodhisattva Doctrine in Buddhist Sanskrit Literature*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul 1932, pp. 10, 17. The Hinayana school of the Sarvāstivādins, however, had formulated a similar *bodhisattva* concept before the appearance of Mahayana, but Mahayana 'elaborated this idea into an ideal valid for all' Conze, *Buddhism*, p. 126, see 125–126. See also Nancy R. Lethcoe, 'The Bodhisattva Ideal in the *Aṣṭa*. and *Pañca*. *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras*,' in *Prajñāpāramitā and Related Systems: Studies in Honor of Edward Conze*, ed. Lewis Lancaster and Luis O. Gomez, Berkeley, California, Lancaster-Miller Publishers 1977.
- 17 MacQueen has noted, however, that in early Mahayana's 'faith tradition' (to which the *Saddharma* belongs), 'there is a tendency to abandon the gradual clarification of mind attained through meditation and asceticism for moments of vision, ecstasy, and inspiration'. (Graeme MacQueen, 'Inspired speech in early

- Mahayana (II)', *Religion* 12:1 (1981), p. 12). As I soon will argue, the reason that this style of meditation was lost in certain segments of early Mahayana (e.g. in the faith tradition) was because the earliest Mahayanists were forced to recruit spiritually untrained laymen. This section of my argument, therefore, is most applicable to the earliest form of *bodhisattvas*—disaffected monks, or perhaps spiritually trained lay members of the *sangha*.
- 18 See Akira Hirakawa 'The rise of Mahayana and its relationship to the *Stūpa*,' *Memoirs of the Research Department of the Tōyō Bunko* 22, Tokyo, Tōyō Bunko 1963, p. 81.
 - 19 See *ibid.*, p. 81.
 - 20 Rosabeth Moss Kanter, *Commitment and Community: Communes and Utopias in Sociological Perspective*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press 1972, p. 83.
 - 21 Wilson, 'An analysis', pp. 10–11.
 - 22 David G. Bromley and Anson D. Shupe, Jr., *'Moonies' in America: Cult, Church, and Crusade*, Beverly Hills, California, Sage Publications 1979, p. 327.
 - 23 Leon Festinger, Henry W. Riecken, and Stanley Schachter, *When Prophecy Fails*, New York, Harper Torchbooks 1956, p. 28 (their emphasis).
 - 24 MacQueen, 'Inspired Speech' (II), p. 6 and n. 26.
 - 25 Bryan R. Wilson, *Magic and the Millennium*, New York, Harper and Row 1973, p. 22.
 - 26 *Ibid.*, p. 40.
 - 27 MacQueen, 'Inspired Speech' (II), p. 4. To summarize the five characteristics of theism that MacQueen has identified in the *Saddharma*: (1) People who presently study the perfection of wisdom do so because, in a former existence, they were present with a Buddha during his lifetime. (2) Furthermore, their existence prior to the present one on earth was with Buddhas in other world systems. (3) These Buddhas continue to support them while they are on earth. (4) Sākyamuni Buddha is directly accessible to them. (5) In dreams and visions, various Buddhas appear and speak to them. The non-theism of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā*, in contrast, premises the perfection of wisdom as both the very means by which the Buddha (and all Buddhas) became enlightened, and his 'successor' on earth.
 - 28 MacQueen, 'Inspired Speech' (II), pp. 4–5.
 - 29 See *AP* IX 203–4, in which the gods proclaim the teaching of the Lord of Subhūti to be 'the second turning of the wheel of *dharma*.' The Lord Buddha, however, immediately denies this claim, saying that '[n]o *dharma* can be turned forwards or backwards. Just this is a *Bodhisattva*'s perfection of wisdom'. For examples in social scientific literature of the mythic time-perspectives held by many sectarian groups, see Bromley and Shupe, *'Moonies'*, p. 53; and Yonina Talmon, 'Pursuit of the millennium: the relation between religious and social change,' *Reader in Comparative Religion*, ed. William A. Lessa and Evon Z. Vogt, 2nd ed., New York, Harper and Row 1965, p. 533, rpt. from *Archives Européennes de Sociologie* III, 1962. See also *Lotus* III 70.
 - 30 On the effectiveness of emotional appeals in eliciting conversions, see Michael Argyle and Benjamin Beit-Hallahmi, *The Social Psychology of Religion*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul 1975, p. 44.
 - 31 Conze, *Buddhism*, pp. 81–5. On the protection: of the believers' dwellings see *AP* III 88; of their minds and bodies see *AP* III 76, XXIII 415, XXV 426–7, IX 201; and of the believers in their rebirths see *AP* XXV 426, *Sad* 12:197–8; *Lotus* XI 248, XVIII 336–53, XXVI 435–6. On the attainment of virtues while preaching see *Sad*

- 19:272 and *Lotus* X 223. The Avalokitésvara *bodhisattva* cult in early Mahayana claimed that one could be saved from danger merely by calling out his name. See *Sad* 25 [Skt.]: 404; *Lotus* XXIV 406–18.
- 32 See Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, pp. 125–128.
- 33 This is conjecture on my part, since I cannot find any incidents in which a *dharma*-preacher tells someone about his previous vow. Yet the Buddha, through his supernatural powers, knew people's past lives and vows (*Lotus* VI 142, 144, 149, VIII 198, 202, IX 206, 211, X 213–14), and I suspect that preachers emulated this practice.
- 34 In the famous story of the burning house (*Sad* 3:58–72; *Lotus* III 72–91), it is not entirely clear whether there are three vehicles (i.e. the paths of the *arhat*, *pratyeka-buddha*, and *bodhisattva*) or four vehicles (i.e. the previously mentioned three, plus the path of the Buddhas). Whether three or four paths is meant, however, the final message is the same. See Hurvitz, *Scripture of the Lotus Blossom*, p. xxii.
- 35 *Ibid.*, pp. xxii–xxiii. See also Andrew Rawlinson, 'the position of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā* in the development of early *Mahāyāna*, *Prajñāpāramitā* and Related Systems, pp. 11–12.
- 36 Bromley and Shupe, 'Moonies,' p. 225; Carroll Stoner and Jo Anne Parker, *All Gods Children: The Cult Experience—Salvation or Slavery*, Radnor, Pennsylvania, Chilton Book Co. 1977, pp. 5–7.
- 37 See Bromley and Shupe, 'Moonies' pp. 70–71, 80.
- 38 Wilson, 'An Analysis,' p. 11; Denton E. Morrison, 'Some notes on relative deprivation, social movements, and social change', *American Behavioral Scientist* 16:2 (1971), pp. 687, 689.
- 39 It is clear that early Mahayana realized the value of literate converts since it tried 'to get good fellow scholars, who together shall read and recite this scripture' (*Sad* 14:216), and who also would write commentaries on it (*Sad* 19:267).
- 40 For references to the non-Mahayana teachings that these lapsed *bodhisattvas* adopted see *AP* XI 233–4, 239–40, 245, and V 112–13.
- 41 Mary Douglas, *Natural Symbols*, London, Barrie and Jenkins 1973, p. 144.
- 42 Lewis Coser, *Greedy Institutions: Patterns of Undivided Commitment*, New York, The Free Press 1974, pp. 107–110.
- 43 Max Weber, *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, trans., ed., and intro. by H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, 1946 rpt., New York, Oxford University Press 1976, p. 317.
- 44 John Lofland and Rodney Stark, 'Becoming a world-saver: a theory of conversion to a deviant perspective', *American Sociological Review* XXX, 1965, p. 861, rpt. in *Studies in Social Movements*, ed. Barry McLaughlin, New York, The Free Press 1969, p. 172; Argyle and Beit-Hallahmi, *Social Psychology*, pp. 38–40, 45. In sectarian terms, Mahayanists reinforced recruits' 'revivalist' conversions with more effective 'affectional' ones. Early Quakers, who also converted many people in revival meetings, similarly tried to connect their enthusiastic converts to more established members. They therefore distinguished the enthusiasts, who were merely 'convinced' of the Quaker message and doctrines, from the more established persons who were truly 'converted.' See Richard T. Vann, *The Social Development of English Quakerism 1655–1755*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press 1969, pp. 39–42; and Barbour, *The Quakers*, pp. 52–53. Unfortunately, the most recent social scientific analysis of the different types of conversion experiences does not consider the complementary potential of revivalist and affective techniques. See John

- Lofland and Norman Skonovd, 'Conversion motifs', *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 20:4 (1981), pp. 373–385, esp. pp. 379–380.
- 45 On the doctrine merit, see Conze, *Buddhism*, pp. 78–79. The basic idea is that people perform certain activities in this life (e.g. almsgiving, remaining patient in the face of insults, leading a pure life, etc.) as a means of attaining a better rebirth.
- 46 On the existence of status distinctions based upon 'spiritual differentiation' within communal sects, see Kanter, *Commitment and Community*, pp. 108–10. For a detailed analysis of the various types of *bodhisattvas* in the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā*, see Lethcoe, 'The Bodhisattva Ideal.'
- 47 MacQueen, 'Inspired Speech,' (II), pp. 5ff. See also his analysis of inspired speech in pre-Mahayana material in 'Inspired Speech in Early Mahayana Buddhism' (I), *Religion* 11:4 (October, 1981), pp. 303–319.
- 48 MacQueen, 'Inspired Speech' (II), p. 10.
- 49 Ibid., p. 12.
- 50 Ibid., p. 8.
- 51 Ibid., p. 12.
- 52 MacQueen, 'Inspired Speech' (II), p. 11, points out that the way in which the gods were thought to bring inspired speech to the itinerant *dharma*-preachers 'has little precedent in Buddhist literature but many precedents in non-Buddhist Indian religion'. Since I claim that early Mahayana recruited people who had little if any active role in the Hinayana tradition, I suspect that they retained some belief in their former gods after they converted. See Conze, *Buddhism*, pp. 85–86.
- 53 Weber, *From Max Weber*, p. 317.
- 54 See Hirakawa, 'Rise of Mahayana', pp. 73, 77.
- 55 This revolutionary restructuring occurred only within the Buddhist community itself, and did not challenge the basic assumptions of the larger social system. Mahayanists wanted social approval for their doctrines, and lamented the fact that they were being slandered in front of kings and court ministers, Brahmins, householders, and other monks (*Sad* 13:205–6; *Lotus* XII 259–60). Likewise, they indicated their acceptance of the larger social system in at least one passage (*Lotus* XIII 273–4).
- 56 Gregory Schopen, 'The Phrase '*sa prthivīpradeśaḥ caityabhūto bhavet*' in *Vajracchedikā*: notes on the cult of the book in Mahāyāna,' *Indo-Iranian Journal* XVII, pp. 171–181.
- 57 See Barbour, *The Quakers*, pp. 52–53.
- 58 Hirakawa's discussion of the *vihāras* near or around the *stūpas* provides useful background information for my argument. See 'Rise of Mahayana', pp. 91, 96–98.
- 59 See Conze, *Perfection of Wisdom*, p. 322 ('son of a good family'); Hirakawa, 'Rise of Mahayana', pp. 69–73.
- 60 An interpretation of these renunciations through cognitive consistency theory seems appropriate. Put simply, 'the more it "costs" a person to do something, the more "valuable" he will consider it, in order to justify the psychic "expense" and remain internally consistent.' Kanter, *Commitment and Community*, p. 76.
- 61 See *ibid.*, pp. 80–82.
- 62 Conze, *Buddhism*, pp. 78–79.
- 63 MacQueen, 'Inspired Speech' (II), pp. 7–8, 12.
- 64 Weber, *From Max Weber*, p. 245.
- 65 Ibid., p. 247.
- 66 The only instance of Subhūti receiving material veneration is when the god Śakra scatters flowers over him (*AP* II 41–2).
- 67 MacQueen, 'Inspired Speech' (II), pp. 9–10.

- 68 Schopen, 'Cult of the Book', pp. 149, 155.
- 69 See Andrew Rawlinson, 'Spiritual Practice in the *Saddharmapundarika Sūtra*,' *Wege zur Ganzheit: Festschrift zum 75. Geburtstag von Lama Anagarika Govinda*, Almora, India 1973, p. 112.
- 70 While I can find three references to women becoming *dharma*-preachers in this world (*Lotus* XXIII 401; *Sad* 18:258, 10 [Skt.]: 370), and two references to women receiving predictions of becoming *dharma*-preachers in other worlds (*Lotus* XII 257–8), I cannot find any references to women being itinerant preachers. All the references to the itinerants in which sex is mentioned indicate that they were males (see, for example, *Lotus* X 216, 223, 225; *Sad* 10 [Skt.]: 370).
- 71 See Schopen, 'The Cult of the Book'.
- 72 Rawlinson, 'Spiritual Practice', p. 112.
- 73 *Ibid.*, pp. 142–143.
- 74 Max Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, trans. A. M. Henderson and Talcott Parsons, 1947 rpt., New York, The Free Press 1964, pp. 363–364.
- 75 *Ibid.*, p. 366.
- 76 Conze, *Perfection of Wisdom*, p. 323, lists the superknowledges (*abhijñā*) as: (1) psychic power, (2) heavenly ear, (3) cognition of others' thoughts, (4) recollection of past lives, (5) heavenly eye, and in some cases (6) cognition of the outflows.
- 77 Rawlinson, 'Spiritual Practice', pp. 139–143. On the *dhāraṇī*s, see Edward Conze, *Thirty Years of Buddhist Studies*, Oxford, Bruno Cassirer 1967, p. 135; and Mircea Eliade, *Yoga, Immortality, and Freedom*, trans. Willard R. Trask, Bollingen Series LXXVI, New York, Pantheon Books 1964, pp. 212–216, 407–408.
- 78 Weber, *Social and Economic Organization*, p. 366.
- 79 *Sad* 2:38–40 cites the following forms of worship: offerings to the Buddha's *śarīra* (relics); *stūpa* erection; earthen Buddha-shrines (even ones built by children at play); sculpture or drawn image-making of the Buddha; music-making; hymn-singing; offerings to painted images; prostrations; joining of palms (of the hands); raising one's hand; inclining one's head; and reciting *Namo Buddhāya* (Homage to the Buddha). These forms of worship correspond to those mentioned in *Lotus* II 50–2. Other sections of the *Lotus* (I 12, XXII 378–80, 384–5) indicate that some Mahayanists paid homage to the Buddha by self-mutilation (see *AP* XXX 498, XXXI 522–3).
- 80 Schopen, 'Cult of the Book', p. 168.
- 81 Hirakawa, 'Rise of Mahayana', p. 85.
- 82 *Ibid.*, pp. 82, 84.
- 83 See *ibid.*, p. 73.
- 84 Rachael L. E. Kohn, 'Dual membership and sectarian status: the case of a Hebrew Christian group'. *Studies in Religion* (forthcoming); see Max Heirich, 'Change of heart: a test of some widely held theories about religious conversion', *American Journal of Sociology* 83, 3 (1977) p. 663.

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