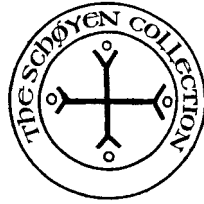


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Corrigendum

On pp. 156–157 the beginning of footnote 115 has been cut off. The missing text reads as follows:

¹¹⁵ Here in this important second verse—absent from P and K, but found in all other versions—the terms *avijñeyā* and *na śakyam vijānitum* do not refer to the impossibility of **understanding** the dharma (so Max Müller and Schopen, but

[then follows:]
such an interpretation is obviously, etc.

Vajracchedikā Prajñāpāramitā
A New English Translation of the Sanskrit Text
Based on Two Manuscripts from Greater Gandhāra*

Paul Harrison

Introduction

In the following pages readers will find a new English translation of the Sanskrit text of the *Vajracchedikā Prajñāpāramitā* based on two of the oldest surviving manuscript copies of the work. The first of these copies is the one in the Schøyen Collection, edited in this volume by Harrison & Watanabe. Only recently discovered, it appears as the second text (following the *Bhaiṣajyaguru*) in MS 2385. This ms is presumed to have come from Afghanistan, possibly the Bamiyan area, and is dated on paleographical grounds to the 6th–7th centuries. The second copy is the Gilgit *Vajracchedikā*, discovered in Northern Pakistan in 1931, and subsequently edited by Chakravarti (1956), Dutt (1959), and Schopen (1989). Since the last edition by Schopen is the only reliable one, it is used as the basis for this translation. The date of the Gilgit ms is approximately 6th–7th centuries also. The Schøyen ms (henceforth S) preserves roughly the first half of the text, in a continuous run over fols. 26–46 (corresponding to §§1–16c), the Gilgit (henceforth G) the last two thirds, on fols. 5–12, but with the loss of one folio, No. 6 (thus covering §§13b–14e, 15b–32b). In basing a translation on a combination of these two manuscripts—joining the upper half of one body to the bottom half of the other, as it were—one is obviously taking the risk of creating a hybrid Frankenstein’s monster unlike any version that ever existed, but there is sufficient overlap in the waist area to establish that the two manuscripts represent roughly the same recension of the text, even if they are not identical.¹ Provided that one clearly marks the line between the two halves, leaving all the stitches visible, no great harm is done. The result is, I hope, a useful rendition of this important text in the form in which it was circulating in the area of Greater Gandhāra in the 6th and 7th centuries A.D.

The Sanskrit text of the *Vajracchedikā* (hereafter Vaj) has been translated into modern languages many times, and Japanese and English versions are especially numerous.² Among the English translations, of particular note are the following:

* Acknowledgements are due to the small group at Canterbury with whom I read Conze’s edition of the *Vajracchedikā* during 2003, namely Rolf Giebel, Aditya Malik, Robert Didham, Michael Spurr, Harrison Garvin, and Elizabeth Guthrie. Their searching questions and comments frequently prompted me to reassess and refine my understanding of the text. I would also like to thank Jay Garfield for many helpful remarks on the philosophical implications of the text and on other aspects of the translation made during his stay at Canterbury as an Erskine Visitor April–June 2004.

¹ In this respect the situation is very similar to that of the Schøyen and Gilgit mss of the *Samādhirāja*, as established by Skilton (2002a).

² For bibliographical details of the many Japanese versions, see Yuyama 1967: 79–82 and Rushi foxue yanjiushi 1995–1996: IV, ii. Also of note are the French translation by de Harlez (1891) and the German rendition by Walleser (1914: 140–158), both of which are reproduced in Rushi foxue yanjiushi 1995–1996, along with seven Japanese translations.

1. F. Max Müller, trs., “The Vajracchedikā [Vagrakkhedikâ] or Diamond-cutter,” *Buddhist Mahāyāna Texts (Sacred Books of the East, 49, Part II)*, Oxford, 1894, pp. 109–144 (with introduction on pp. xii–xix).
2. E. Conze, trs., “English Translation,” in his *Vajracchedikā Prajñāpāramitā, Edited and Translated with Introduction and Glossary (Serie Orientale Roma XIII)*, Rome, 1957, pp. 65–92. 2nd edition, with Corrections and Additions, Rome, 1974.³
3. E. Conze, trs., *Buddhist Wisdom Books, containing the Diamond Sutra and the Heart Sutra*, London, 1958, pp. 15–74.
4. E. Conze, trs., “The Diamond Sutra,” in his *The Short Prajñāpāramitā Texts*, London, 1973, pp. 122–139.
5. G. Schopen trs., “Translation of the Gilgit Text,” in *Studies in the Literature of The Great Vehicle: Three Mahāyāna Buddhist Texts*, ed. by L. O. Gómez and J. A. Silk, Ann Arbor, 1989, pp. 123–131, with notes on pp. 133–139.
6. Mu Soeng trs., *The Diamond Sutra: Transforming the Way We Perceive the World*, Boston, 2000.⁴
7. Red Pine, trs., *The Diamond Sutra: Perfection of Wisdom: Text and Commentaries Translated from Sanskrit and Chinese*, Washington, D.C. & New York, 2001.⁵
8. G. Schopen trs., “The Perfection of Wisdom,” in D. S. Lopez Jr., ed., *Buddhist Scriptures* (London, 2004), pp. 450–463.

Of these Conze 1958 and 1973 are basically the same rendition as Conze 1957, with only minor modifications to the wording,⁶ while Schopen 2004b is a straight reprinting of Schopen 1989, without the notes. With the exception of Schopen’s work, which is a deliberate attempt to treat the Gilgit ms in its own right, all other translations from the Sanskrit are based on the text as established in M or in Cz. Further, in matters of interpretation as well the more recent translations owe a heavy debt to Conze.

³ In the second edition the text of the translation is unchanged, although some of the notes in the section entitled “Corrections and Added Notes” appended on pp. 115–118 suggest improvements to it, and should not be overlooked.

⁴ This work is only included here for completeness, since the “translation” itself is an assemblage of material drawn from existing translations, including the Chinese (i.e. of Kumārajīva), although it is claimed on p. ix that it is based on the original Sanskrit text as edited by Max Müller, with additional “reliance” on Conze’s edition. The author admits that he has “borrowed freely from [previous] translations in order to produce an easily accessible rendering for the modern reader” and “tried to soften the impact of archaic presentation as much as possible, while retaining the essence of the Sanskrit original.” The result, however—as far as the translation is concerned—is almost entirely derivative, and adds little that is new to our understanding of the text.

⁵ This is a rather free rendering, ostensibly based on M and Cz for the Sanskrit. See pp. 35–36 for comments on the sources and methods used for the translation.

⁶ Conze 1957 [2nd ed. 1974] and Conze 1973 omit the commentary with which Conze intersperses his 1958 translation, although Conze 1957 does contain an extensive glossary (pp. 93–113) with many notes. Excerpts from Conze’s translation have been published elsewhere by him, e.g. in Conze 1959: 164–168.

These translations are of course merely some of the more recent examples of a long line of renditions of the Vaj into languages other than Sanskrit, including Chinese, Khotanese, Sogdian, and Tibetan, stretching back to the early 5th century. There are 6 Chinese translations extant:

1. T. 235: *Jingang boruo boluomi jing* 金剛般若波羅蜜經, by Kumārajīva, 402 A.D. (hereafter referred to as K)
2. T. 236: *Jingang boruo boluomi jing* 金剛般若波羅蜜經, by Bodhiruci, 509 (= B)⁷
3. T. 237: *Jingang boruo boluomi jing* 金剛般若波羅蜜經, by Paramārtha, 562 (= Z for Zhendi 真諦)
4. T. 238: *Jingang neng duan boruo boluomi jing* 金剛能斷般若波羅蜜經, by Dharmagupta, 605⁸ (= D)
5. T. 220(9): *Da boruo jing dijiuhui nengduan jingang fen* 大般若經第九會能斷金剛分, by Xuanzang, 648 (= X)
6. T. 239: *Fo shuo nengduan jingang boruoboluomiduo jing* 佛說能斷金剛般若波羅蜜多經, by Yijing, 703 (= Y)

To these we must add the translation into Tibetan, the *Śes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa rdo rje gcod pa*, translated by Śīlendrabodhi and Ye śes sde around the beginning of the 9th century,⁹ and that into Khotanese.¹⁰ For details of versions in other languages, Sogdian, Uigur, Mongolian, Manchu, etc., see Conze 1978: 60–66 and Yuyama 1967: 61ff.

The Vaj has also several times been translated into English from the Chinese version made by Kumārajīva. Among these translations, I have been able to consult the following:

1. A.F. Price & Wong Mou-Lam trs., *The Diamond Sutra and the Sutra of Hui Neng*, Berkeley, 1969 (Price's translation of the Vaj appears on pp. 23–75).¹¹
2. Charles Muller, "The Diamond Sutra," published on the Internet in September 2003 at http://www.hm.tyg.jp/~acmuller/bud-canon/diamond_sutra.html.¹²

The previous translations of the Sanskrit text of the Vaj by Max Müller, Conze and Schopen have been of great assistance in producing this one, and I happily acknowledge my debt to them. I have tried, however, to correct their occasional errors of interpretation while attempting to move away from the unnatural style which has become the standard in English translations of Buddhist texts,

⁷ Under this Taishō number there are actually two translations attributed to Bodhiruci, the second of which (757a20–761c29), however, seems to be a variant of Paramārtha's translation, T. 237. Our siglum B designates the first text under this number, which often appears to reproduce the wording of K.

⁸ Yuyama 1967: 73 gives the date as ca. 592, and notes the existence of a second version by Dharmagupta dated ca. 613 embedded in the *Jingang boruo lun* 金剛般若論 (T. 1510b). On the "unfinished" nature of T. 238, which sets it apart from all the other Chinese versions, see Zacchetti 1996.

⁹ The edition referred to here is the Derge (sDe dge).

¹⁰ As edited and translated by Sten Konow (1916). For further details see Emmerick 1992: 34–35.

¹¹ First published as *The Jewel of Transcendent Wisdom* by the Buddhist Society, London, in 1947 (2nd ed. 1955, entitled *The Diamond Sutra*).

¹² For details of other English renditions of Kumārajīva's version, by Beal, Gemmell, Goddard & Wai-tao, Suzuki and Wai-tao, see Yuyama 1967: 81–82.

that ugly but strangely seductive dialect which Paul Griffiths catchily christened “Buddhist Hybrid English.”¹³ It has been a long-cherished ambition of mine to make a translation of a Mahāyāna sūtra in which nobody courses in anything, speaks thus, or produces a single thought. And why? Because in English the “production of a thought” is a non-production: although we have thoughts, think them, entertain them, although thoughts arise and occur to us, we never “produce” them. Many such examples could be adduced, but the point hardly needs labouring. Linguistic oddities of this type are best avoided. In attempting to do this, my translation is inevitably a little freer than, say, Conze’s and Schopen’s, while reflecting as accurately as it can the distinctive phrasing and brevity of the two Greater Gandhāran exemplars. It is designed—perhaps with an unrealistic degree of optimism—both for specialists who may wish to make out every feature of the Sanskrit text behind the English veil, and for non-specialists who will simply want to be able to read the English as English and make some sense of it. For that reason I have attempted to translate as many terms as possible, making an exception only for the following four words, for which the renditions in bold type may be used at any point to replace the Sanskrit:

bodhisattva: one with the courage for awakening > **aspirant to awakening**

mahāsattva: one of great courage or heroism > **magnanimous one**

Buddha: **Awakened One**

dharma: **truth, reality; teaching** (of the Buddha); **phenomenon, thing** (in the sense of basic factor of existence); **object of thought; quality**

The words *buddha* and *bodhisattva* may now be regarded as English, and so can readily go untranslated. *Mahāsattva* is left as is because it is commonly paired with *bodhisattva*, and ought therefore to be handled in the same way. In any case “the aspirants to awakening and magnanimous ones” is a little cumbersome. With *dharma*, however, we run into more serious difficulties, since the various senses of the word are not clearly demarcated: *dharma* denotes truth or reality, the way things are, and since the Buddha’s teachings expound this they are in a sense equivalent to truth. Similarly *dharmas* in the plural are things which exist in reality, they are “truths” or “realities,” we might say, as opposed to the fictional constructs which we normally take to be the objects of our experience. While it is tempting to translate *dharma* as often as possible by the English word “thing,” a plausible strategy adopted by Schopen (see Schopen 1989: 125, n. 13), this will hardly do justice to its multiple meanings, when two or more of them are in play. I have therefore felt compelled to leave the word untranslated.¹⁴

Unfortunately this is not the only place where I have had to admit defeat. Indeed, the degree of difficulty encountered in translating even a relatively short text like the Vaj into English should not be underestimated. I have no doubt therefore that certain readers will find my interpretations wanting and my renditions not to their taste. Since some of them have, as far as I know, not been tried before, readers already familiar with the text may expect a few surprises. With regard to one problem, however, it is worth removing the element of surprise by making a few general remarks in advance, and that is the question of how to deal with the Vaj’s “signature formula.” This has usually been understood by previous interpreters as: X is a non-X, that is why it is called X, or

¹³ See Griffiths 1981.

¹⁴ With the exception of the compound *dharmaparyāya*, “round of teachings.”

similar phrasing to that effect.¹⁵

While it may be tempting to read this in a vague fashion as some kind of mystical subversion of language, careful consideration of both the grammatical aspects and philosophical implications of this formula may help us to get a clearer idea of what the Vaj is saying. Let us begin with the grammar. When a word (X) is negated by the *a-* or *an-* prefix, one can translate it either as a *karmadhāraya* (not X, no X, non-X) or as a *bahuvrīhi* (X-less, lacking X, having no X). Thus to say of someone that he is *aputra* could mean that he is not a son or no son (with the possible implication that he is in fact a son but one not worthy of the name), or that he is sonless, i.e. he has no sons. It would be fair to say that readers of English translations of the Vaj have become habituated to the *karmadhāraya* interpretation, which does in fact have a very long history. If we take one instance of the formula (at §13c) from the text to illustrate this, we see the following pattern:

Sanskrit:

S: *yā sā lokadhātur adhātuḥ sā tathāgatena bhāṣitaḥ | tad ucyate lokadhātur iti |*; cf.

P: *yo so lokadhātuḥ adhātuḥ sa tathāgatena bhāṣitaḥ tad ucyate lokadhātur iti |*;

G: *yo 'py asau lokadhātur adhātuḥ sa tathāgatena bhāṣitaḥ tenocyate lokadhātur iti |*;

M, Cz: *yo 'py asau lokadhātus tathāgatena bhāṣito 'dhātuḥ sa tathāgatena bhāṣitaḥ | tenocyate lokadhātur iti |*.¹⁶

Chinese:

K (750a19–20): 如來說世界非世界。是名世界。

B1 (754b4–5): 如來說世界非世界。是名世界。

B2 (758c27–28): 此諸世界。如來說非世界故說世界。

Z (763c5–6): 此諸世界。如來說非世界故說世界。

D (768c4–6): 若彼世界如來說。非界如來說。彼故說名世界者。

X (982a17–18): 諸世界如來說非世界。是故如來說名世界。

Y (773a27): 此諸世界佛說非界。故名世界。

Tibetan:

'jig rten gyi khams gaṅ lags pa de khams ma mchis par de bzin gśegs pas gsuṅs te | des na 'jig rten gyi khams zes bya'o ||. (= That which is a world system has been said to be systemless by the Tathāgata, and thus it is called a world system.)

English:

Max Müller 1894: 125 (translating M): And what was preached by the Tathāgata as the sphere of worlds, that was preached by the Tathāgata as no-sphere. Therefore it is called the sphere of worlds.

Price 1969 [1947]: 41 (translating K): [Furthermore,] the Tathagata declares that a world is

¹⁵ There are at least 30 instances of this, in §§5, 8 (formula occurs twice), 10b, 10c, 13a, 13c (twice), 13d, 14a, 14c, 14d (an unusual case), 14e, 14f (twice), 17d, 17e, 17g, 18b, 20a, 20b, 21b, 23, 25 (twice), 30a, 30b (twice), 31a, 31b. There are in addition several borderline cases.

¹⁶ As with most sections, when one compares S with M & Cz, one finds numerous minor variants in the text, and some major ones, but they do not alter the basic structure of the formula.

not really a world; it is called “a world.”

Conze 1957: 75 (translating Cz): And that which as a world system was taught by the Tathagata, as a no-system that has been taught by the Tathagata. Therefore it is called a ‘world system.’¹⁷

Schopen 1989: 123 (translating G): Also, that which is a world system, that is said by the Tathāgata not to be a system. In that sense ‘world system’ is used.¹⁸

Red Pine 2001: 11 (translating M & Cz): And what the Tathagata says is a world-system, the Tathagata says is no system. Thus it is called a ‘world-system.’

Muller 2003: §13 (translating K): The Tathāgata teaches that worlds are not worlds. Therefore they are called worlds.

It is interesting that only the Tibetan translation opts here, as it does throughout the text, for the *bahuvrīhi* interpretation (*X med pa* or *X ma mchis pa*). All the Chinese translations, however, foreshadow the English renditions listed here in reading the relevant term as a *karmadhāraya* (*fei 非 X*) rather than a *bahuvrīhi* (*wu 無 X*). Both readings are **grammatically** possible: to say, for example, of the *lokadhātu* that it is *adhātu* could be legitimately construed as saying that the world-system (or world-realm, world-sphere, world-element, etc.) is not a system (or realm, sphere, etc.), or is a non-system, or is no system at all (here the *karmadhāraya*), or that it lacks a system, or there is no system in it (*bahuvrīhi*). However, in my view the *bahuvrīhi* reading is more cogent **philosophically**, and in this regard, I think the Tibetan translators have got it right. Hence I translate “Any world-system there is has been preached by the Realized One as systemless. Thus it is called a world-system.”

It is significant that in all occurrences of the formula we are dealing with compounds, usually comprising two elements, in which the first element, whether it be a noun or an adjective, qualifies the second.

- §5: lakṣaṇasaṃpat > alakṣaṇasaṃpat
- §8: puṇyaskandha > askandha
buddhadharmāḥ > abuddhadharmāḥ
- §10b: kṣetravyūhāḥ > avyūhāḥ
- §10c: ātmabhāva > abhāva
- §13a: prajñāpāramitā > apāramitā
- §13c: pṛthivīrajas > arajas
lokadhātu > adhātu
- §13d: dvātrīṣān mahāpuruṣalakṣaṇāni > alakṣaṇāni
- §14a: bhūtasamjñā > asamjñā
- §14c: ātmasamjñā > asamjñā
- §14d: paramapāramitā > aparimāṇā (?)¹⁹
- §14e: kṣāntipāramitā > apāramitā
- §14f: satvasamjñā > asamjñā

¹⁷ Punctuation here and in the following examples as in the original. Cf. Conze 1958: 52 & 1973: 128: “And this world-system the Tathagata has taught as no-system. Therefore it is called a ‘world system.’”

¹⁸ So too Schopen 2004, but with hyphenation of “world-system.”

¹⁹ This is a doubtful case, which may have been generated by an earlier Prākṛt form of the formula. See the note to the translation below.

- sarvasatvāḥ > asatvāḥ
 §17d: sarvadharmāḥ > adharmāḥ
 §17e: upetakāya, mahākāya > akāya
 §17g: kṣetravyūhāḥ > avyūhāḥ
 §18b: cittadhārāḥ > adhārāḥ
 §20a: rūpakāyapariniṣpatti > apariniṣpatti
 §20b: lakṣaṇasāmpat > alakṣaṇasāmpat
 §21b: sarvasatvāḥ > asatvāḥ
 §23: kuśalā dharmāḥ > adharmāḥ
 §25: ātmagrāha > agrāha
 bālapṛthagjanāḥ > ajanāḥ
 §30a: paramāṇusaṃcaya > asaṃcaya
 §30b: trisāhasramahāsāhasro lokadhātu > adhātu
 piṇḍagrāha > agrāha
 §31a: ātmadrṣṭi > adrṣṭi
 §31b: dharmasamjñā > asamjñā

In all these cases, the second element is syntactically predominant (what Sanskrit grammarians call the *pradhāna*), while the first element is subordinate (the *upasarjana*). In most cases the *pradhāna* has the prefix *a-* attached to it, and where the first element also appears after the *a-*, it can be argued that the *a-* does not apply to it, but to the *pradhāna*.²⁰ The key to the interpretation of all these passages is in my view provided by the Vaj itself, in the Āgama phrase echoed in Section 17h: *nirātmāno dharmā*, “*dharmas* are selfless.”²¹ Also expressed in Sanskrit in the formulation *anātmakāḥ sarve dharmāḥ*, “all *dharmas* are selfless,” this is less ambiguous than the common Pāli phrase *sabbe dhammā anattā*, in which *anattā* is often construed as a *karmadhāraya*.²² Such a reading is precluded by the Sanskrit forms, which must be read as *bahuvrīhis*. Thus *nirātmāno dharmā* means that all *dharmas* lack a self or an essence, or to put it in other words, they have no core ontologically, they only appear to exist separately and independently by the power of conventional language, even though they are in fact dependently originated. This is understood in the first instance with regard to persons, who in reality lack a self (conceived of as a permanent and unchanging core or essence of their being) inside them which makes them what they are, over and above what they already are. And yet, if they had such a self, they could not be what they are. In the same way, the perfection of insight, for example, is really *aparamitā*, which is to say “selfless” in the sense that it does not contain any perfection within itself, it is devoid of perfectionhood, so to speak, which would constitute its self. But it is only because this is so that conventional language works, hence the final element of the Vaj formula, which affirms the use of the relevant term. If there was perfection in the perfection of insight, then perfection would exist apart from the perfection of insight, and we would have two things, not one, and we could no longer speak about anything as the perfection of insight. In fact, we would lay ourselves open to an infinite regress. However, there is no perfection existing as an entity in and of itself apart from the perfection of

²⁰ The denial by Buddhist philosophers of the *pradhāna* (in this context = “primal matter,” “fundamental principle”) of the Sāṃkhya springs to mind here.

²¹ The theme is also raised in Vaj §28 which mentions the bodhisattva’s attainment of *nirātmakeṣu dharmeṣu kṣānti*, “acceptance with regard to the fact that *dharmas* are selfless.”

²² So, for example, Bodhi (2000): “all phenomena are nonself” (Vol. I, p. 946 = S.iii.133; Vol. II, p. 1394 = S.iv.401).

insight, the perfection of generosity, and so on. The Vaj is not therefore an expression of some kind of mystical paradoxicality, but is rather analogous to the standpoint taken by Nāgārjuna, in asserting that conventional language only makes sense because of the ultimate emptiness of the things it names, embedded as they are in a network of causal relationships. It is with these considerations in mind that I have opted throughout to follow the lead of the Tibetan translators and render words like *apāramitā* as *bahuvrīhis* (“perfectionless”), even though a *karmadhāraya* reading (“non-perfection”) can also be applied. Of course, it is always possible that the text is playing on both senses at the same time, and there even appear to be cases where a third reading is implied, by way of a pun.

To turn back to the translation as a whole, I have attempted throughout to keep footnotes to a minimum, since the editions of Harrison & Watanabe and of Schopen provide ample details of the readings of their respective manuscripts. I have therefore limited the notes to the discussion of readings which raise substantive problems in interpretation. A full inventory of all the differences between all the Sanskrit versions would rapidly get out of hand, more so if the Chinese and Tibetan versions were also taken into account. The objective here is to allow the non-specialist reader to grasp what the Vaj looked like at one particular point of its evolution through time, and in one particular part of the Buddhist world (or, to be more precise, two points and two parts not too widely separated from each other). For that reason I have paid special attention to versions of the text produced before the beginning of the 7th century, that is, apart from S and G themselves, to the Central Asian ms discovered by Sir Aurel Stein and edited by Pargiter in Hoernle 1916 (hereafter P),²³ and to the earlier Chinese translations, especially those made in 402 by Kumārajīva (K), in 509 by Bodhiruci (B),²⁴ and 562 by Paramārtha (Z). In any case, the later recension of the Sanskrit text, and its Chinese and Tibetan counterparts, tend to amplify formulaic passages or spell things out in full, rather than add new material, and noting all these amplifications would generate an unacceptably large body of footnotes without a significant increase in illumination.

A few comments on the Gilgit text are in order, since that is the basis of the second half of this translation. Although Schopen’s edition is executed with exemplary care—unlike those of Chakravarti and Dutt, whose defects Schopen documents at length in his notes—in at least one respect it can be improved, since it is after all supposed to be an exact representation of the ms.²⁵ The particular method for marking the *virāma* in that ms gave Schopen some trouble (see his comments on pp. 91–92), although what he is referring to is clearly a reduced form of the letter *m* written beneath the normal punctuation mark, which resembles a horizontal comma. He used *m* [with dots above and below] to mark this, which could simply be changed automatically to *m** in accordance with the conventions used in this volume. Other cases of *virāma* involving final *n* and *t*, however, went unmarked, although presumably they should have been recorded. The following corrections are therefore required (conversion of *m* with dots above and below to *m** being taken as read in all cases):

²³ Pargiter dates this to around the end of the 5th or the beginning of the 6th century A.D. (p. 178).

²⁴ Bodhiruci’s translation appears to have incorporated much of the wording of Kumārajīva’s, so its status as an independent witness is in some doubt.

²⁵ See Schopen 1989: 95, 97–98. I am indebted to my colleague Kazunobu Matsuda for kindly supplying me with a print-out of the microfilm of the Gilgit ms considerably more legible than the published facsimile edition. This allowed me to check Schopen’s edition, which must have been based on a print less satisfactory than mine, since many akṣaras which he places within parentheses are clearly legible in my copy.

- 5a5: prāmunīcat > prāmunīcat* av(o)cat > av(o)cat*
 5a7: āścaryena > āścaryeṇa bhagavan > bhagavan*
 5b5: acchaitṣīt > acchaitṣīt*
 7a5: buddabodhim > buddhabodhim
 9a2: kaccid bahavas > kaccid vahavas
 10a2: evam etat aṇur > evam etat* aṇur
 10a5: rāśin > rāśin*
 10b5: 'bhaviṣyat āha > 'bhaviṣyat* āha
 11b3: bhavet ahai- > bhavet* ahai-
 11b4: bhavet tat > bhavet* tat
 12a2: vadan vadet > vadan vadet*
 12a4: pratyupatiṣṭhet > pratyupatiṣṭhet*
 12a6: deśayet > deśayet*
 12b1: samprakāśayet > samprakāśayet*
 12b3: abhyanandan > abhyanandan*

Some of these are simply misprints, and although *virāma* has implications for phrasing, none of these corrections alters the sense in any way.

The paragraph divisions are those used by Conze, which are based on those of Max Müller's edition (see Harrison & Watanabe in this volume). While not always optimal, they have been retained so that readers may compare this version with other editions and translations of the text, and to facilitate internal cross-reference in my own footnotes. This is necessary given the peculiar structure of the text, which tends to repeat itself, seldom verbatim, but sometimes more than once. There seems to be no logic to this, at least none I can discern, the effect being rather like a composition which has retained some of its own earlier draft material instead of discarding it. However, although it may look unsystematic and even haphazard to us, the text may well be constructed according to principles which only become evident after much time has been devoted to memorizing and reflecting upon it.²⁶

This is not, however, the place for a full study of the structure of the Vaj, or of its content, as desirable as that would be. There is no doubt that it is an important text, and probably an early one, even though the oldest extant Chinese translation was done by Kumārajīva at the beginning of the 5th century.²⁷ Despite being a Prajñāpāramitā text—and *Prajñāpāramitā* is the name it gives itself several times—it never once uses the term “emptiness” (*śūnyatā*), and it pursues, as we have already noted, a distinctive strategy of affirmation through denial, but in many other respects it resembles the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā*, commonly thought to represent the initial formulation of the Prajñāpāramitā tradition. Its antiquity is suggested by the presence of puns and wordplays which, even in the comparatively older manuscript copies translated here, have already been obscured or obliterated entirely by transposition from a presumed earlier Prākṛt form into a more regular Sanskrit. Similar cases of paronomasia submerged beneath the rising tide of Sanskritization can be found in the *Aṣṭa*, which we know to predate the late 2nd century A.D.

²⁶ Instructive in this regard is Griffiths 1999, especially pp. 40–49. Griffiths' work prompts one to consider how the Vaj is divided into what he calls “gobbets” (p. 49), units of text short enough to be easily memorized and recalled. I suspect that the use of words like *atha khalu* helps to mark these gobbets, deliberately reproducing features of oral delivery.

²⁷ For observations on the date of the text see Schopen 1975, esp. p. 153.

Translation

[Schøyen Text]

Hail to Śākyamuni, the Realized, Worthy and Perfectly Awakened One!²⁸

§1 This is the word²⁹ as I heard it once when the Lord was staying in Śrāvastī, in Jetṛ’s Grove, at the monastery of Anāthapiṇḍada, together with a large community of monks 1,250 monks strong.

Then the Lord got dressed in the morning, took his bowl and robe, and entered the great city of Śrāvastī for alms. Then, after walking around the great city of Śrāvastī for alms, the Lord returned in the afternoon after eating the almsfood, washed his feet, and sat down on the seat set out for him with legs crossed, body held erect and attention directed in front of him. Then a great many monks approached the Lord, and after approaching him they prostrated themselves at the Lord’s feet, circumambulated the Lord three times, and sat down to one side.

§2 Moreover, on that occasion the Venerable Subhūti had joined that particular assembly and was seated with it. Then the Venerable Subhūti rose from his seat, arranged his cloak over one shoulder, went down on his right knee, saluted the Lord with his hands placed together, and said this to the Lord: “It is a marvellous thing, Lord, just how much bodhisattvas and mahāsattvas have been favoured with the highest of favours by the Realized, Worthy and Perfectly Awakened One, just how much bodhisattvas have been entrusted with the greatest of trusts by the Realized One. How, Lord, should one who has set out on the bodhisattva path take his stand, how should he proceed, how should he control the mind?”

At these words the Lord said this to the Venerable Subhūti: “Well done, Subhūti, well done! Quite so, Subhūti. Bodhisattvas have been favoured with the highest of favours by the Realized One, bodhisattvas have been entrusted with the greatest of trusts by the Realized One. Therefore listen, Subhūti, and pay attention closely and carefully. I will tell how one who has set out on the bodhisattva path should take his stand, how he should proceed, how he should control the mind.” “Yes, Lord,” replied the Venerable Subhūti, signifying his assent to the Lord.

§3 The Lord said this to them³⁰: “In this regard, Subhūti, those who have set out on the bodhisattva path should have the following thought, ‘However many living beings are comprised in the total aggregation of living beings, be they born from eggs, or born from wombs, or born from moisture, or arising spontaneously, whether having physical form or being non-material, whether having apperception, or lacking apperception, or neither having apperception nor lacking apperception—however the realm of living beings is defined when one defines it—I should bring all of them to final extinction in the realm of extinction without substrate remaining. But after I

²⁸ Cf. Nattier 2003: 26–27 for remarks on these opening formulas of homage.

²⁹ Here I attempt to convey something of the deeper significance of the Skt. verb *śru-* as it is used in Buddhist texts (in *śruta*, *śruti*, *śrāvaka*, etc.), to denote not just any hearing, but the hearing of the sacred or liberating word, i.e. of *buddha-vacana*.

³⁰ So S, even though the Buddha is addressing Subhūti. Unsupported by any other version, *tān* could well be a scribal error for *tam*.

have brought immeasurable living beings to final extinction³¹ in this way, no living being whatsoever has been brought to extinction.’ What is the reason for that?³² If, Subhūti, the idea of a living being occurs to a bodhisattva, he should not be called a bodhisattva. Why is that?³³ Subhūti, anybody to whom the idea of a living being occurs, or the idea of a soul or the idea of a person occurs, should not be called a bodhisattva.

§4 “However, a bodhisattva should not give a gift while fixing on an object, Subhūti. He should not give a gift while fixing on anything. He should not give a gift while fixing on physical forms. He should not give a gift while fixing on sounds, smells, tastes or objects of touch, or on *dharmas*. For this is the way, Subhūti, a bodhisattva should give a gift, so that he does not fix on the idea of the distinctive features (of any object).³⁴ Why is that? Subhūti, it is not easy to take the measure of the quantity of merit, Subhūti, of the bodhisattva who gives a gift without fixation. What do you think, Subhūti, is it easy to take the measure of space in the east?”

Subhūti said, “Indeed not, Lord.”

“Similarly, is it easy to take the measure of space in the south, west, north, nadir, zenith, all the intermediate directions and any direction besides them, in the ten directions?”³⁵

Subhūti said, “Indeed not, Lord.”

The Lord said, “Quite so, Subhūti. Quite so, Subhūti.³⁶ It is not easy to take the measure of the quantity of merit of the bodhisattva who gives a gift without fixation. However, this is the way a bodhisattva should give a gift, Subhūti, as an instance of the meritorious activity which consists in giving.³⁷

§5 “What do you think, Subhūti, can a Realized One be seen by virtue of the possession of distinctive features?”

Subhūti³⁸ said, “A Realized One cannot be seen by virtue of the possession of distinctive features. Why is that? The very thing which the Realized One has preached as the possession of distinctive features lacks any possession of distinctive features.”³⁹

³¹ Emending *parini*<*r*>*vāpayitavyāḥ* to *parinirvāpayitvā* (with P).

³² In this translation *tat kasmād dhetoḥ* is rendered by “What is the reason for that?”, and the more common *tat kasya hetoḥ* by “Why is that?” There is no discernible difference in meaning.

³³ “Why is that?” seems extraneous here, since what follows does not give a reason for the statement, but merely repeats it in an amplified form. The wording in P makes better sense: “Why is that? He is no bodhisattva, Subhūti, to whom the idea of a self occurs, or the idea of a living being, or the idea of a soul, or the idea of a person.” Z reads similarly (T. 237, 762b7–9).

³⁴ This use of *nimitta* lends itself, as far as I can see, to at least two possible interpretations. The first is that, far from fixing on any phenomenal basis or object of the senses when giving, the true bodhisattva does not fix even on the idea of the external features of any of these, that is to say, his giving is absolutely fluid and free. This seems to be how the Chinese and Tibetan translations interpret the text. The second possibility is that *nimitta* has its sense of “cause” or “reason.” Thus, the bodhisattva’s giving is not based even on the idea of a motive (for giving), let alone on any motive itself.

³⁵ S is defective, since the ms omits *adhah*, down below, the nadir. We have restored it on the basis of M & Cz, but K, B & Z also attest its presence.

³⁶ While M & Cz read “In the very same way, Subhūti, ...” which seems a more plausible reading, given that a comparison is being drawn, the reading of S here is echoed by B, D and X among the Chinese translations. Tib. accords with M & Cz.

³⁷ This apparently commentarial amplification is reflected in none of the other versions consulted. See BHSD, s.v. *pūnyakriyāvastu*.

³⁸ Emending *bhagavān āha* to *subhūtir āha*, since the speaker must be Subhūti here.

³⁹ Or, if we opt for the *karmadhāraya* interpretation (see the discussion in the introduction above) “is itself the non-possession of distinctive features.” Alternatively, *alākṣaṇasampat* can be translated as “the possession of no distinctive features.” But here I take the *a-* suffix as negating the whole compound, with *sampat* as its primary term

At these words the Lord said this to the Venerable Subhūti, “Subhūti, as long as there is any distinctive feature there is falsehood, and as long as there is no distinctive feature there is no falsehood. Accordingly it is by virtue of the featurelessness of his distinctive features that a Realized One can be seen.”

§6 At these words the Venerable Subhūti said this to the Lord, “Can it be, Lord, that there will be any living beings at a future time, when the final five hundred⁴⁰ years come to pass, who, when the words of such discourses as these are being spoken, will conceive the idea that they are the truth?”

The Lord said, “Subhūti, you must not say things like ‘Can it be that there will be any living beings at a future time, when the final five hundred years come to pass, who, when the words of such discourses as these are being spoken, will conceive the idea that they are the truth?’! On the contrary, Subhūti, there will be bodhisattvas and mahāsattvas at a future time, when in the final five hundred years the destruction of the true *dharma* is coming to pass, who will be endowed with moral conduct, good qualities, and insight. Moreover it is not the case, Subhūti, that the bodhisattvas will have served a single Buddha, or that they will have planted the roots of goodness under a single Buddha. On the contrary, Subhūti, they will have served many Buddhas, they will have planted the roots of goodness under many Buddhas. As for those who, when the words of such discourses as these are being spoken, will experience the serenity of faith, even if it is for no more than a single thought, the Realized One knows them, Subhūti, the Realized One sees them, Subhūti. They will all generate and come to be endowed with an immeasurable quantity of merit. Why is that? Because, Subhūti, the idea of a self will not occur to those bodhisattvas, nor will the idea of a living being, or the idea of a soul, or the idea of a person occur to them. Not even the idea of a *dharma* will occur to those bodhisattvas, Subhūti, nor the idea of a non-*dharma*; not even an idea or a non-idea will occur to them. Why is that? If, Subhūti, the idea of a *dharma* should occur to those bodhisattvas, for them that would constitute seizing upon a self, it would constitute seizing upon a living being, seizing upon a soul, seizing upon a person. If the idea of a non-*dharma* should occur, for them that would constitute seizing upon a self, seizing upon a living being, seizing upon a soul, seizing upon a person. Why is that? One should moreover not take up any *dharma*, Subhūti, or any non-*dharma*. It was therefore with this in mind that the Realized One said that those who understand the round of teachings of the Simile of the Raft⁴¹ should let go of the *dharmas* themselves, to say nothing of the non-*dharmas*.”⁴²

(*pradhāna*), since in similar passages later in the text it is always the *pradhāna* which is negated rather than the secondary term (*upasarjana*). Conze’s “no-possession of no-marks” is an indefensible attempt to have it both ways.

⁴⁰ Strictly speaking, *pañcāsatī* is Sanskrit for 50, but in Buddhist texts it generally carries the meaning 500. On this question see Yuyama 1992 and Nattier 1991, esp. p. 91, n. 89.

⁴¹ The reference here is to a section of the discourse known (in its Pāli form) as the *Alagaddūpamasutta*, No. 22 in the *Majjhima-nikāya* (M.I.130–142, esp. pp. 134–135). See Horner 1954: 167–182, esp. pp. 173–174, or Ñāṇamoli 1995: 224–236, esp. pp. 228–229. In this text the *dharma* is compared to a raft, which can be left behind once it has served its purpose of enabling one to cross the water. In the Pāli version *kullūpama* is perhaps better understood as an adjective qualifying *dhamma* (as it is by Ñāṇamoli, “when you know the Dhamma to be similar to a raft”) rather than as a noun, as it is by Horner (“by understanding the Parable of the Raft”). In the Sanskrit text of the Vaj, however, the second of these two interpretations seems more likely, given the use of the term *dharmaparyāya*, but the Tib. certainly opts for the first reading (*chos kyi rnam graṅs gziṅs lta bur śes pa rnam kyis...*). Among the Chinese translations K follows the first reading, B, D, Z, X & Y the second.

⁴² Although it is impossible to convey this fully in English, the text here appears to be playing on two meanings of the word *dharma*, viz. ultimate factor of existence and teaching of the Buddha, and two meanings of the verb *udgrah-*, “to take up” or “to grasp” and “to learn.” Bodhisattvas do not have ideas about the self, etc., which are conventional fictions—that is, they do not conceive that they exist—nor do they even have such ideas about the supposedly real

§7 Furthermore, the Lord said this to the Venerable Subhūti, “What do you think, Subhūti? Is there anything whatsoever that the Realized One has fully awakened to, or any *dharma* whatsoever that the Realized One has taught, as supreme and perfect awakening?”

Subhūti said, “Lord, as I understand the meaning of what the Lord has preached, there is no *dharma* whatsoever that the Realized One has fully awakened to, nor any *dharma* whatsoever that the Realized One has taught, as supreme and perfect awakening. Why is that? The *dharma* which the Realized One has taught⁴³ is ungraspable, it is ineffable, it is neither a *dharma* nor a non-*dharma*. Why is that? Because the Noble Persons are distinguished by the power they derive from the unconditioned.”⁴⁴

§8 “What do you think, Subhūti? If someone were to fill this trigalactic megagalactic world-system⁴⁵ with the seven treasures and give it as a gift, then what do you think, Subhūti, would that gentleman or lady generate a lot of merit on that basis?”⁴⁶

Subhūti said, “A lot, Lord, a lot, Blessed One. That gentleman or lady would generate a lot of merit on that basis. Why is that? It is indeed, Lord, quantityless. For that reason the Realized One preaches that a quantity of merit is quantityless.”⁴⁷

The Lord said, “If, however, some gentleman or lady were to fill this trigalactic megagalactic world-system with the seven treasures and give it as a gift, Subhūti, and if someone else were to do no more than learn just one four-lined verse from this round of teachings and teach and illuminate it for others, then the latter would on that basis generate a lot more merit, an immeasurable, incalculable amount. Why is that? Because it is from this, Subhūti, that the supreme and perfect

factors which underlie them. They do not have any ideas at all. No reality is to be grasped or seized upon, still less anything which is not a reality. However, since the verb *udgrah-* also means “to learn,” this yields the second (and less predictable) meaning “The teaching should not be learned, nor anything which is not the teaching.” Then, borrowing the wording of the *Alagaddūpamasutta* (or its Sanskrit equivalent in an Āgama collection) the text states that *dharmas* (= factors) should be given up, to say nothing of non-*dharmas*. But this can also be read as “The teachings should be let go of, to say nothing of what is not the teachings.” This is, according to Gombrich (1996: 22–25), the correct interpretation of this statement in its original context. One possible implication of this section is that those who reject the Vaj and texts like it will do so precisely because of the idea that it is not the *dharma* (*adharmasamjñā*), whereas bodhisattvas have transcended such rigid notions, and are therefore open to the salvific truth.

⁴³ M & Cz have “The *dharma* which the Realized One has fully awakened to or taught...” Here I interpret the syntax of the paragraph differently from Conze and Müller, in connecting both the awakening and the teaching to supreme and perfect awakening. In other words, the Vaj is not denying the Buddha’s teaching of the *dharma* altogether, but is asserting that there is no *dharma* called supreme and perfect awakening which can be awakened to or attained (hence it is said to be ungraspable) or taught (hence ineffable).

⁴⁴ The phrase *asamskr̥taprabhāvita* can be read in several different ways, so I have tried to represent more than one of its possible meanings. Tib. takes *prabhāvita* as “differentiated” or “distinguished” (*rab tu phye ba*), as does K (749b17–18). B has “they take their name because of the unconditioned *dharmas*” (753b22–23), while Z takes *prabhāvita* as “revealed” (762c22).

⁴⁵ Skt. *trisāhasramahāsāhasralokadhātu*. I propose this rendition as a more serviceable substitute for the literal but opaque “three-thousand great-thousand world-system,” following the interpretation of the Skt. term by Akira Sadakata (1997: 93–94). If we use the word “galaxy” to represent a group of a thousand systems, we can understand a trigalactic system (*trisāhasra*) as a system which consists not of three galaxies, but of a galaxy of galaxies of galaxies of worlds, that is to say, as a galaxy cubed (1,000³ worlds). This is also known as a megagalaxy (*mahāsāhasra*). Sadakata, incidentally, translates “Thousand-cubed great-thousand world.”

⁴⁶ Characterized by Mu Soeng (2000: 111) as an “inconceivable scenario,” the idea of filling the cosmos with precious substances and offering them to the Buddhas to generate merit (found repeatedly throughout the Vaj and in many other Mahāyāna sūtras) may well reflect actual ritual practices in Mahāyāna monasteries. It is quite possible that there is a connection between this and the Tibetan practice of the “maṇḍala offering,” in which practitioners use a set of ritual implements to symbolize the universe, which they fill with precious or non-precious substances according to their means in order to make offerings to the Buddhas and gurus (for a description of this practice see, e.g., Powers 1995: 266–270).

awakening of the Realized Ones is born, it is from this that the Buddhas and Lords are born. What is the reason for that? The so-called ‘*dharmas* of a Buddha,’ Subhūti, are indeed devoid of any *dharmas* of a Buddha.⁴⁸

§9a “What do you think, Subhūti? Does it occur to a Stream-enterer that he has obtained the fruit of Stream-entry?”

Subhūti said, “No indeed, Lord.⁴⁹ Why is that? Because, Lord, he has not entered anything. That is why he is called a Stream-enterer. He has not entered form, nor has he entered sounds, smells, tastes, objects of touch, or *dharmas*. That is why he is called ‘a Stream-enterer.’”

§9b The Lord said, “What do you think, Subhūti? Would it occur to a Once-returner that he has obtained the fruit of a Once-returner?”

Subhūti said, “No indeed, Lord.⁵⁰ It does not occur to a Once-returner that he has obtained the fruit of a Once-returner. What is the reason for that? Because there is no *dharma* whatsoever which enters the state of being a Once-returner. That is why one is called ‘a Once-returner.’”

§9c The Lord said, “What do you think, Subhūti? Does it occur to a Non-returner that he has obtained the fruit of a Non-returner?”⁵¹

[Subhūti said, “No indeed, Lord. It does not occur to a Non-returner that he has obtained the fruit of a Non-returner.] Why is that? There is no *dharma* whatsoever which observes that it is a Non-returner. That is why one is called ‘a Non-returner.’”

§9d The Lord said, “What do you think, Subhūti? Does it occur to a Worthy One that he has obtained the state of a Worthy One?”

Subhūti said, “No indeed, Lord. Why is that? Because there is no *dharma* whatsoever, Lord, which is called a Worthy One. If, Lord, it should occur to a Worthy One that he has obtained the state of a Worthy One, then for him that would indeed constitute seizing upon a self, it would constitute seizing upon a living being, seizing upon a soul, seizing upon a person.

§9e “I am the one, Lord, who was designated by the Realized, Worthy and Perfectly Awakened One as the foremost of those who live in peace, and I am, Lord, a Worthy One free of passion, but it does not occur to me, Lord, that I am a Worthy One. If it were to occur to me, Lord, that I have attained the state of a Worthy One, the Realized One would not have declared of me ‘As the foremost of those who live in peace, the gentleman Subhūti does not live anywhere. That is why he is the so-called “one who lives in peace”.’”⁵²

⁴⁷ M & Cz, like Tib, have here “For that reason the Realized One preaches the so-called quantity of merit.” Unfortunately this section is extant in neither P nor G, but K reads in line with M & Cz.

⁴⁸ In other words, there are in fact no Buddha-*dharmas* in the so-called Buddha-*dharmas*. Here the term *buddhadharmāḥ* encompasses both the qualities proper to a Buddha and the teachings of a Buddha. Note the use here of the expression “so-called” to convey the repeated and customary use of particular terms, which the Sanskrit marks by simple repetition of the terms in question, followed by *iti*. I refrain from translating such repetitions literally, as previous translators have, since this yields English which is both unnatural and opaque. But see §17h for one case which needs to be handled differently.

⁴⁹ Both in §9a & §9b, S inserts at this point *bhagavān āha*, “The Lord said,” but this must be a scribal error. Other versions (M & Cz; all Chinese; Tib.) lack any equivalent for *bhagavān āha*, and in them it is Subhūti who continues to speak, asking the rhetorical question *tat kasya hetoḥ*. In this respect they are followed by S in §9d (§9c is defective, see below).

⁵⁰ See the preceding note. In this section the words *bhagavān āha* / *tat kasya hetoḥ* must be deleted.

⁵¹ At this point S omits the anticipated wording, apparently through a scribal error of the sort *saut du même au même*. I have restored it on the basis of the text of §9d, but since the wording of §9 as a whole is not completely regular (see the preceding notes), the restoration is left within square brackets to mark its tentative nature. We can be reasonably certain, however, that at the very least the words *subhūtir āha* / *no hīdaṃ bhagavan* (Subhūti said, “No indeed, Lord.”) have been omitted.

§10a The Lord said, “What do you think, Subhūti? Did the Realized One learn any *dharma* at all from the Realized, Worthy and Perfectly Awakened One Dīpaṃkara?”

Subhūti said, “No indeed, Lord.⁵³ There is no *dharma* at all which the Realized One learned from the Realized, Worthy and Perfectly Awakened One Dīpaṃkara.”

§10b The Lord said, “Any bodhisattva, Subhūti, who says ‘I will make the dispositions of a field perfect!’ would be telling a lie. Why is that? Because these so-called ‘dispositions of a field,’ Subhūti, have been preached by the Realized One as dispositionless. That is why they are called ‘dispositions of a field.’

§10c “For that reason, then, Subhūti, a bodhisattva should conceive an aspiration in such a way that it is unfixed. He should not conceive an aspiration which is fixed in form, he should not conceive an aspiration which is fixed in sounds, smells, tastes, objects of touch, or *dharmas*, he should not conceive an aspiration which is fixed in anything at all. Subhūti, it is as if, say, there were a man, whose personal presence was such that it was like, say, Sumeru, the king of all mountains. What do you think, Subhūti? Would his personal presence be substantial?”

Subhūti said, “His personal presence would be substantial, Lord, it would be substantial, Blessed One. Why is that, Lord? The Realized One has described it as an absence. That is why it is called ‘a personal presence.’ For it is not a presence. That is why it is called ‘a personal presence.’”⁵⁴

§11 The Lord said, “What do you think, Subhūti? If there were just as many Ganges Rivers as there are grains of sand in the Ganges River, would the grains of sand in them be numerous?”

Subhūti said, “That many Ganges Rivers alone would be numerous, Lord, to say nothing of the grains of sand in them.”

The Lord said, “I’ll tell you, Subhūti, I’ll have you know—if there were as many world-systems as there would be grains of sand in those Ganges Rivers, and some woman or man were to fill them with the seven treasures and make a gift of them to the Realized, Worthy and Perfectly Awakened Ones, what do you think, Subhūti, would that woman or man generate a lot of merit on that basis?”

Subhūti said, “A lot, Lord, a lot, Blessed One. That woman or man would generate a lot of merit on that basis.”

The Lord said, “If, however, someone were to fill that many world-systems with the seven treasures and make a gift of them, Subhūti, and if someone were to do no more than learn just a four-lined verse from this round of teachings and teach it to others, the latter would generate from that a lot more merit, an immeasurable and incalculable amount.

§12 “However, Subhūti, the piece of ground where one might do no more than recite or teach just a four-lined verse from this round of teachings would become a veritable shrine for the whole world with its gods, humans and anti-gods, so it goes without saying, Subhūti, that those who will

⁵² It is possible that this section contains a wordplay on the terms *aranavihārin* (one living in peace or living in dispassion) and *araṇyavihārin* (one living in the forest or the wild). Thus a person who lives in the wild (*araṇya*) rather than in a village, town or city is not domiciled anywhere in particular, and therefore could be said to live nowhere. However, similar reasoning could be applied to one who lives in peace or the absence of conflict (*araṇa*). This can be seen as a variation on the signature formula of the Vaj, in which the second term in the compound is negated: there is no actual dweller in a “dweller in peace.” Also of note in this section is the apparent use of the term *kulaputra* to refer to a *bhikṣu*.

⁵³ S inserts the words *bhagavān āha* here in error.

⁵⁴ The term *ātmabhāva*, here translated rather inadequately as “personal presence,” denotes one’s own person or body (and is so translated in §13e below). The literal sense of the compound, however, is “self-existence,” and it is on this that the text plays here, no doubt with the Buddhist doctrine of the non-existence of the self in mind. The existence of

memorize this round of teachings⁵⁵ will come to be endowed with the most marvellous thing, and on that piece of ground⁵⁶ the Teacher himself dwells, or one or another of his venerable lieutenants.”⁵⁷

§13a At these words, the Venerable Subhūti said this to the Lord, “What is the name, Lord, of this round of teachings, and how should I memorize it?”

At these words, the Lord said this to the Venerable Subhūti, “This round of teachings, Subhūti, is called the Perfection of Insight, and this is how you should memorize it. Why is that? The very Perfection of Insight, Subhūti, which the Realized One has preached is itself perfectionless.

§13b “What do you think, Subhūti? Is there any *dharmā* at all which the Realized One has preached?”

Subhūti said, “No indeed, Lord.⁵⁸ There is no *dharmā* at all, Lord, which the Realized One has preached.”

§13c [*Gilgit Text Begins Here, Schøyen Text Continues*]⁵⁹“Would all the dust of the earth, Subhūti, that there is in the trigalactic megagalactic world-system be a lot?”

Subhūti said, “Lord, the dust of that much earth would be a lot. Any dust of the earth preached by the Realized One, Lord, has been preached by the Realized One as dustless. Thus it is called ‘the dust of the earth.’ Any world-system there is has been preached by the Realized One as systemless. Thus it is called ‘a world-system.’”

§13d The Lord said, “What do you think, Subhūti? Can a Realized, Worthy, and Perfectly Awakened One be seen by virtue of the 32 Distinctive Features of a Great Man?”

Subhūti said, “No indeed, Lord.⁶⁰ Why is that? Whatever 32 Distinctive Features of a Great Man have been preached by the Realized One, Lord, have been preached by the Realized One as featureless. Therefore they are called ‘the 32 Distinctive Features of a Great Man.’”⁶¹

§13e The Lord said, “If, however, some woman or man were to sacrifice as many of their own bodies as there are grains of sand in the Ganges River, Subhūti, and if someone were to learn just a four-lined verse from this round of teachings and teach it to others, the latter would on that basis generate a lot more merit, an immeasurable and incalculable amount.”⁶²

§14a Then the Venerable Subhūti burst into tears at the impact of the *dharmā*. Wiping his tears

the self (*ātmabhāva*) is indeed an absence (*abhāva*), since the self is not a substantially existing thing (*bhāva*).

⁵⁵ I.e. in its entirety, as opposed to just one *gāthā* from it. This is made explicit in the recension represented by M & Cz by the addition of the words *sakalasamāptam*.

⁵⁶ I.e. where they do this.

⁵⁷ Presumably an implicit reference to *stūpas* containing relics of the Buddha or of his leading disciples. In not punctuating after *dhārayiṣyamti* I follow both S and Tib. (and differ from Max Müller and Conze), taking the phrase *kaḥ punar vādah* to apply to the rest of the section, and reading *ya imaṃ dharmaparyāyaṃ dhārayiṣyamti paramēṇa te āścaryeṇa samanvāgatā bhaviṣyamti* as a relative-correlative construction. This way of construing this critical passage prompts a reconsideration of Gregory Schopen’s important and much-cited paper, “The Phrase ‘*sa prthivīpradeśās caityabhūto bhavet*’ in the *Vajracchedikā*: Notes on the Cult of the Book in Mahāyāna” (Schopen 1975). In brief, the hyperbolic phrasing we see here seems to me to be of the same order as English expressions like “He worships the very ground on which she walks,” thus providing about as much evidence for the cult of the book as a physical object, or of the particular places in which it is kept, recited, and so on, as the aforementioned English locution furnishes proof of ground-worship. While quite a lot hangs on the way in which we fill in the ellipses in this passage, it is clear that, whichever way we interpret it, its primary intent is to glorify the Vaj, and, by extension, those who act as bearers of the text, thus emphasising the social processes and dynamics of its transmission—which may at this stage have been primarily oral (cf. Schopen 1975: 168, 179)—rather than the particular sites at which it occurred. See also §15c below.

⁵⁸ Deleting the words *bhaga<vā>n āha* which S inserts here in error. Otherwise the vocative *bhagavaṃ* in the following sentence makes no sense.

⁵⁹ Gilgit ms (folio 5a) begins here, supplying the words *bhagavān āha*, which S lacks.

⁶⁰ Deleting the words *bhagavān āha* which S inserts here in error. G lacks them.

⁶¹ For the first occurrence of this theme see §5 above.

away as he continued to shed them,⁶³ he said this to the Lord, “It is a marvellous thing, Lord, it is a most marvellous thing, Blessed One, that this round of teachings has been preached by the Realized One. Since knowledge arose for me, Lord,⁶⁴ I have never heard a round of teachings of this kind before.⁶⁵ They will come to be endowed with a most marvellous thing, Lord, who when this discourse is being preached conceive the idea that it is the truth. But any such idea of truth, Lord, is indeed idealess. Therefore the Realized One preaches the so-called ‘idea of truth.’

§14b “For me it is no great marvel, Lord, that I believe and have faith in the round of teachings⁶⁶ when it is being preached. Those, Lord, who will learn, master, and memorize this round of teachings will come to be endowed with a most marvellous thing.

§14c “However, Lord, the idea of a self will not occur to them, nor will the idea of a living being, the idea of a soul, or the idea of a person occur. Why is that? Any such idea of a self is indeed idealess, any idea of a living being, idea of a soul, or idea of a person is indeed idealess. Why is that?⁶⁷ Because the Buddhas and Lords are free of all ideas.”

§14d At these words the Lord said this to the Venerable Subhūti, “Quite so, Subhūti! Quite so, Subhūti! Those living beings will come to be endowed with a most marvellous thing who, when this discourse is being preached, do not become afraid, frightened or fearful on hearing it. Why is that? This has been preached by the Realized One as the supreme perfection. And what the Realized One preaches as the supreme perfection is preached by innumerable Buddhas and Lords. That is why it is called ‘the supreme perfection.’⁶⁸

§14e “However, Subhūti, any perfection of acceptance the Realized One has is indeed perfectionless. Why is that? When, Subhūti, King Kalmāsa cut off my limbs and extremities, I did not have at that time any idea of a self or idea of a living being or idea of a soul or idea of a person.

⁶² Cf. §8 above for a similar statement.

⁶³ Here I take the *pravartayam* of S, not attested by any other version, as a present participle (= *pravartayan*), literally “letting (the tears) flow.” Somewhat awkward, it may even derive from a gloss on *prāmuñcat* (*prāvartayat?*) incorporated into the text.

⁶⁴ Max Müller, Conze, Schopen, Mu Soeng and Red Pine all attach *yato me jñānam utpannam* to the preceding sentence, e.g. Schopen: “It is astonishing ... how this discourse on Doctrine was spoken by the Tathāgata, as a consequence of which knowledge has arisen for me.” However, the Tibetan and all Chinese versions without exception follow the interpretation chosen here, which is also suggested by the implicit punctuation of S: *bhāṣitaḥ yato* instead of *bhāṣito yato* (so G), *utpannam na* (so too G) instead of *utpannam* na*. Despite being aware of this way of reading the text (see Conze 1974: 116), Conze never revised his translation to suit. The wording *me jñānam utpannam* reflects one of the formulas used to describe the attainment of arhatship (see PTSD, s.v. *arahant*, formula II.D), that is, Subhūti is saying that this is the first time since he became a Worthy One (*arhat*) that he has ever heard such a teaching. Of the modern translations from the Sanskrit which I have consulted, de Harlez (1891) is the sole European, Watanabe (1955–1956) the sole Japanese version to choose this interpretation. Such is the power of tradition, that even Red Pine and Mu Soeng, despite their recourse to the Chinese translations, simply followed the false trail taken by their modern predecessors, elaborating their commentaries to suit.

⁶⁵ Emending S to *na mayā jātv eva <mrūpo> dharmaparyāyaḥ śrutapūrvah.*

⁶⁶ According to all other Sanskrit versions: “in **this** round of teachings.”

⁶⁷ The previous two sentences do not occur in G, almost certainly because of a scribal error (an eye-skip between two instances of *tat kasya hetoh*). They are found in P, where the wording is slightly amplified.

⁶⁸ As it stands now the Sanskrit text is simply alliterative, repeating the sounds p-r-m (*parama, pāramitā, aparimāṇa*). However, I assume speculatively that the process of Sanskritization has obscured a much tighter play on words here, in which *aparimāṇa* was originally a Prakritic form like *aparamida* or something similar, thus delivering the *double-entendre* “Innumerable Buddhas and Lords preach it/Buddhas and Lords preach it as **perfectionless**.” For example, Gāndhārī *para-* for Skt./Pāli *pari-* is attested in one of the Senior scrolls, for which see Salomon 2003, esp. p. 88 (here Gāndhārī *paraḍa* for Skt. *paridāha*/Pāli *pariḷāha*). In relation to the term *pāramitā*, this hypothesis would permit the restoration of the affirmation-negation-affirmation strategy found throughout the Vaj. Although Z is close to our ms (so too Tib.), K implies a Sanskrit text reading *yā tathāgatena paramapāramitā bhāṣitā saivā(parama)pāramitā tenocyate parama-*

I had no idea whatsoever, nor any non-idea. Why is that? If, Subhūti, I had had the idea of a self at that time, I would also have had the idea of ill-will at that time. I remember, Subhūti, 500 rebirths in the past when I was the sage Kṣāntivādin, and then too I had no idea of a self, no idea of a living being, no idea of a soul, and no idea of a person.⁶⁹

“For that reason, then, Subhūti, a bodhisattva and mahāsattva should conceive the aspiration for supreme and perfect awakening after eliminating all ideas, he should not conceive an aspiration which is fixed on forms, he should not conceive an aspiration which is fixed on sounds, smells, tastes, or objects of touch, he should not conceive an aspiration which is fixed on *dharmas*, he should not conceive an aspiration which is fixed on non-*dharmas*, he should not conceive an aspiration which is fixed on anything. What is the reason for that? Whatever is fixed is indeed unfixed. For that very reason the Realized One preaches⁷⁰ that a gift should be given by one without fixing on form.

§14f “However, Subhūti, this is the way in which a bodhisattva should engage in the giving away of gifts for the benefit of all living beings, but any idea of a living being is indeed idealess. All living beings of whom the Realized One has preached are indeed beingless. The Realized One, Subhūti, speaks truly, the Realized One tells the truth, he tells things as they are, the Realized One does not tell lies.

§14g “However, Subhūti, in that *dharma* which the Realized One has awakened to and taught there is no truth and no falsehood. Subhūti, one should regard a bodhisattva who has sunk to the level of objects and who gives away a gift which has sunk to the level of objects as being like, say, a man who has been plunged into darkness. Subhūti, one should regard a bodhisattva who gives a gift which has not sunk to the level of objects as being like, say, a man endowed with sight, who would see shapes of various kinds when dawn breaks and the sun comes up.

§14h “However, Subhūti, those gentlemen or ladies who will learn, memorise, recite, and master this round of teachings, the Realized One knows them, Subhūti, the Realized One sees them, Subhūti, the Realized One comprehends them. All those living beings will generate an immeasurable quantity of merit.⁷¹

§15a “If, however, some woman or man were to sacrifice in the morning as many of their own bodies as there are grains of sand in the Ganges River, Subhūti, were to sacrifice in the middle of the day and in the evening as many of their own bodies as there are sands in the Ganges River, were to sacrifice their own bodies in this manner for a hundred thousand million billion aeons, and if someone were to hear this round of teachings and not reject it, the latter would on that basis generate a much larger quantity of merit, an immeasurable and incalculable amount, to say nothing of someone who after copying it would learn it, memorize it, recite it, master it, and elucidate it in full for others.⁷²

§15b “However, Subhūti, this round of teachings is inconceivable and incomparable. The Realized

pāramitā (note that the lacuna in P could not accommodate more text than this). B expands the wording in the direction of the later Sanskrit text.

⁶⁹ For the story cycle referred to here see Skilton 2002. The name of the king varies from one version of the story to the next, but here we see no reason to take Kalimṅga as referring to the country, as Max Müller and Conze do (Tib. also reads this way), rather than as the name of the king himself or alternatively as an epithet describing him, “an evil king” (so Edgerton, see BHSD, s.v. *kali*, and Schopen, see p. 124, n. 6). G has Kalirājā, while P’s Kalimṅgarājā is mostly Pargiter’s reconstruction, and cannot be relied upon. Of the Chinese versions, K, B, & X have phonetic transcriptions reflecting the reading Kalirājā, Z & Y Kalimṅgarājā; only D translates: “an evil king.” Similarly, we take Kṣāntivādin as a proper name (as does Tib. & Z), where others, such as Skilton, usually interpret it as a title.

⁷⁰ As, for example, in §4 above.

One has preached this round of teachings for the benefit of living beings who have set out on the highest path, for the benefit of living beings who have set out on the best path. Those who will learn, memorise, recite, and master this round of teachings, the Realized One knows them, Subhūti, the Realized One sees them, Subhūti. All those living beings will come to be endowed with an immeasurable quantity of merit, they will come to be endowed with an inconceivable, incomparable, unreckonable, measureless quantity of merit.⁷³ Why is that? This *dharma*, Subhūti, cannot be heard by those of inferior inclinations, nor can it be heard, or learned, or memorized, or recited, or mastered by those who hold the false view of a self, who hold the false view of a living being, who hold the false view of a soul, or who hold the false view of a person. That is an impossibility.

§15c “However, Subhūti, on whatever piece of ground one elucidates this discourse, that piece of ground will become worthy of worship, that piece of ground will become worthy of veneration and reverential circumambulation for the whole world with its gods, human beings and anti-gods, that piece of ground will become a shrine.⁷⁴

§16a “Those gentlemen and ladies, Subhūti, who will learn, memorise and master such discourses as these will be despised, they will be roundly despised.⁷⁵ Whatever acts leading to perdition those living beings have done in former rebirths, through being despised they will in this life⁷⁶ exhaust the demeritorious acts of their former rebirths, and they will attain the awakening of a Buddha.

§16b “I remember, Subhūti, that in the past, an incalculable aeon ago and more incalculable still, back before the Realized, Worthy and Perfectly Awakened One Dīpaṃkara and back further still, there were 84 hundred thousand million billion Buddhas with whom I found favour and with whom, after finding favour, I did not lose favour.⁷⁷ However, Subhūti, that previous quantity of merit from when I found favour with the Buddhas and Lords, and after finding favour with them, I did not lose favour, does not approach even a hundredth part, even a thousandth part, even a hundred-thousandth part, even a hundred-thousand-millionth part, it does not even permit of any calculation, or reckoning in fractions, or computation, or comparison, or analogy, Subhūti, in relation to the quantity of merit from when, in the last time, as the final five hundred years come to pass, they will learn, memorize, recite and master this discourse.⁷⁸

⁷¹ Cf. §6 above for a similar statement.

⁷² Cf. §13e above.

⁷³ After this sentence G & Frag f read *sarve te satvā mamāṃsena* (Frag f: *mama a(m)sena*) *bodhiṃ* (Frag f: *bodhi*) *dhārayiṣyanti* (“Those living beings will all carry my awakening on their shoulders”), so possibly does P (although *mamāṃsena* is unclear), and K & B have “These people will carry on their shoulders the *anuttarā samyakṣambodhi* of the Realized One.” It is quite possible that this sentence, attested in all Chinese translations and in Tib., has been omitted from S by scribal error due to homoeoteleuton (eye skip from *bhaviṣyanti* to *dhārayiṣyanti*). See the long note on the significance of this expression in Schopen, p. 124, n. 9.

⁷⁴ Cf. §12 above.

⁷⁵ Max Müller’s “overcome” and Conze’s “humbled” obscure the force of this important passage. Schopen’s “ridiculed” is better. We have here a possible indication of the early date of this text, or at least of a time when the ideas it propounded did not meet with wide acceptance. In new religious movements, contempt and abuse suffered at the hands of others are often accepted as a form of authentication, bolstering the identity of adherents. We find this theme, e.g., in the New Testament (where it is also couched in the form of prophecy; see, e.g., Matthew 10.22; Luke 21.17–19), and may also see an echo of it in Chapter XIX of the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīkasūtra*, with its story of the bodhisattva Sadāparibhūta (“Ever despised”). See also Schopen’s note on this passage (p. 137, n. 11), which addresses the notion of purification by suffering.

⁷⁶ The citation of this passage in the *Śikṣāsamuccaya* has the phrase *dr̥ṣṭa eva dharme* directly preceding the verb *kṣapayīṣyanti*, contra all extant versions of the Vaj, presumably to clarify the meaning of the sentence (see Harrison & Watanabe in this volume, n. 560).

⁷⁷ S alternates between forms of *ārādhayati/virādhayati* and *ārāgayati/virāgayati*, thus indicating that they are synonymous. G (like M & Cz) has only *ārāgayati/virāgayati*, while P attests only *ārādhayati/virādhayati*.

§16c “If, Subhūti, one were to describe the quantity of merit of those gentlemen and ladies, of as many of those gentlemen or ladies as acquire a quantity of merit at that time, those living beings would go mad⁷⁹ or become mentally disturbed.⁸⁰

[Schøyen Text Ends Here; Gilgit Text Translated From This Point]

However, Subhūti, this round of teachings is inconceivable, and the effect it has is truly inconceivable.⁸¹

§17a He said, “How, Lord, should one who has set out on the bodhisattva path take his stand, how should he proceed, how should he control the mind?”

The Lord said, “In this regard, Subhūti, one who has set out on the bodhisattva path should have the following thought, ‘I should bring all living beings to final extinction in the realm of extinction without substrate remaining. But after I have brought living beings to final extinction in this way, no living being whatsoever has been brought to extinction.’ Why is that? If, Subhūti, the idea of a living being were to occur to a bodhisattva, or the idea of a soul or the idea of a person, he should not be called a bodhisattva.⁸² Why is that? There is no *dharma* called ‘one who has set out on the bodhisattva path.’

§17b “What do you think, Subhūti? Is there any *dharma* which the Realized One had from the Realized One Dīpaṃkara by which he fully awakened to supreme and perfect awakening?”

He said, “There is no *dharma* whatsoever which the Realized One had from the Realized One Dīpaṃkara by which he fully awakened to supreme and perfect awakening.”⁸³

He said, “Therefore the Realized One Dīpaṃkara predicted of me ‘At a future time, young man, you will become a Realized, Worthy and Perfectly Awakened One by the name of Śākyamuni!’

§17c “Why is that? The word ‘Realized’ (*tathāgata*), Subhūti, is a synonym for reality (*tathatā*).

§17d “Should anyone say, Subhūti, that the Realized One has fully awakened to supreme and perfect awakening,⁸⁴ there is no *dharma* whatsoever to which the Realized One has fully awakened

⁷⁸ Cf. §6.

⁷⁹ Or, perhaps better, intoxicated, viz. by the thought of all the merit they will acquire in times to come. Only S, however, has “those living beings” (*te sattvāḥ*). Although P is missing a folio at this point, M, Cz and G have just “living beings,” without further specification, and it is this reading which seems to be reflected in Tib. and all Chinese versions. Thus Conze has “beings would become frantic and confused,” suggesting that those who heard the Buddha would be adversely affected, while Schopen, more explicitly, has “living beings (who heard that declaration) would go mad, they would be totally disoriented.” But the likely point here, at least for S, seems to be that it is those beings who are to take up the Vaj in the last days who would become unhinged by their excitement at the prospect of their future gains if they were to be spelled out in full. The precise sense of the clause beginning with *yāva(m)taḥ* (this reconstruction in S is suggested by the *yāvantas* of G) is not entirely clear, but a number of versions, including Tib., appear to read in line with the *yāvat* as found in M, Cz and P, thus: “(describe) the extent to which those gentlemen and ladies acquire a quantity of merit at that time.”

⁸⁰ S breaks off at this point.

⁸¹ Cf. Schopen 1989: 125, n. 12.

⁸² This repeats in shortened form the substance of §§2–3 above.

⁸³ The rendition adopted here follows that of Max Müller in avoiding the awkward implication (retained by both Conze and Schopen) that Śākyamuni reached full awakening under Dīpaṃkara, since he certainly did not. While the passage as it stands could well refer to some teaching which Śākyamuni acquired from Dīpaṃkara and **later** used as a basis for awakening (thus echoing some of the material found in §§7 & 10), it is also possible that *abhisambuddha* in the sense of “comprehended” has been automatically supplied with its usual object *anuttarā(m) samyaksambodhiṃ*. Note, however, that this section is greatly amplified in all other versions apart from G (including the small fragment published by Bongard-Levin and Vorobyova-Desyatovskaya and, it is highly likely, P as well, if one estimates the amount of text on P’s missing folio 12), suggesting that G has fallen victim to scribal lapse.

as supreme and perfect awakening. In the *dharma* to which the Realized One has fully awakened, there is no truth and no falsehood.⁸⁵ Therefore the Realized One preaches ‘All *dharmas* are Buddha-*dharmas*.’ As far as ‘all *dharmas*’ are concerned, Subhūti, all of them are *dharma*-less. That is why they are called ‘all *dharmas*.’⁸⁶

§17e “Subhūti, it is as if there were, say, a man who was full-bodied and big-bodied.”⁸⁷

Subhūti said, “That man whom the Realized One has described as full-bodied and big-bodied has, Lord, been described by the Realized One as bodiless. That is why he is called full-bodied and big-bodied.”

§17f The Lord said, “Quite so, Subhūti. Any bodhisattva who would say such things as ‘I will bring living beings to final extinction’ should not be called a bodhisattva. Why is that? Does any *dharma* at all exist called ‘a bodhisattva,’ Subhūti?”

He said, “No indeed, Lord.”⁸⁸

The Lord said, “Therefore the Realized One preaches that all *dharmas* are devoid of a living being, devoid of a soul, devoid of a person.

§17g The bodhisattva, Subhūti, who would say such things as ‘I shall make the dispositions of a field perfect’ should also be described in just that way.⁸⁹ Why is that? The Realized One has preached, Subhūti, that the so-called ‘dispositions of a field’ are dispositionless. That is why they are called ‘dispositions of a field.’⁹⁰

§17h “The bodhisattva who has faith, Subhūti, in the oft-repeated saying ‘*Dharmas* are selfless’⁹¹ has been declared by the Realized, Worthy and Perfectly Awakened One to be a bodhisattva, a bodhisattva indeed.”⁹²

§18a “What do you think, Subhūti? Does the Realized One have the eye of the flesh?”

He said, “It is so, Lord, the Realized One has the eye of the flesh.”

The Lord said, “What do you think, Subhūti? Does the Realized One have the eye of the gods, the eye of insight, the eye of *dharma*, the eye of the Awakened?”

He said, “It is so, Lord, the Realized One has the eye of the gods, the eye of insight, the eye of *dharma*, the eye of the Awakened.”⁹³

§18b The Lord said, “What do you think, Subhūti? If there were as many Ganges Rivers as there are grains of sand in the Ganges River, and if there were just as many world-systems as there would be grains of sand in them, would those world-systems be numerous?”

[He said, “Quite so, Lord, those world-systems would be numerous.”]⁹⁴

⁸⁴ One expects the apodosis “he would be speaking a falsehood,” as in M and Cz, but it is not found in P or K either. It is found, however, in Tib. and all other Chinese versions.

⁸⁵ Cf. §14g above.

⁸⁶ In this section the meaning of the word *dharma* shifts between thing, teaching and quality, and sometimes all three senses are in play at once. Cf. §8 above.

⁸⁷ One expects a question to be put to Subhūti here, as in §10c above, which this section echoes, with his answer followed by *tat kasya hetoḥ* (Why is that?). Here, however, this part of the exchange is dispensed with.

⁸⁸ This repeats the substance of §17a, which itself repeats the gist of §2.

⁸⁹ I.e. as no bodhisattva. See Schopen 1989: 126, n. 15.

⁹⁰ This section repeats §10b.

⁹¹ On the significance of this statement here, see the introduction above.

⁹² The repetition of the word *bodhisattva* in the main clause is a little puzzling, but it is attested by G & P, as well as by Tib. and B, Z, X and Y. M & Cz both have *bodhisattvo mahāsattva ity ākhyātaḥ*, which looks like a later attempt to resolve the awkwardness (alone among the Chinese versions, D reads this way as well).

⁹³ Although condensed in G, this passage in P, M & Cz, Tib., and all six Chinese translations is expanded to its full extent, with each “eye” the separate subject of question and answer.

The Lord said, “Subhūti, as many living beings as there might be in those world-systems, I would know⁹⁵ their manifold streams of thought. Why is that? Those so-called ‘streams of thought,’ Subhūti, have been preached by the Realized One as streamless. That is why they are called ‘streams of thought.’ Why is that? Subhūti, one cannot apprehend a past thought, one cannot apprehend a future thought, one cannot apprehend a present [thought].⁹⁶

§19 “What do you think, Subhūti? If someone were to fill this trigalactic megagalactic world-system with the seven treasures and give it as a gift, would that gentleman or lady engender a lot of merit on that basis?”

He said, “A lot, Lord. A lot, Blessed One.”

The Lord said, “Quite so, Subhūti, quite so. It is a lot. That gentleman or lady would engender a lot of merit on that basis. If there were a quantity of merit, Subhūti, the Realized One would not have preached the so-called ‘quantity of merit.’⁹⁷

§20a “What do you think, Subhūti? Can a Realized One be seen by virtue of the perfection of his physical body?”

He said, “No, Lord, a Realized One cannot be seen by virtue of the perfection of his physical body. Why is that? The so-called ‘perfection of the physical body’ has been preached by the Realized One as perfectionless. That is why it is called the ‘perfection of the physical body.’⁹⁸

§20b The Lord said, “What do you think, Subhūti? Can a Realized One be seen by virtue of the possession of distinctive features?”

He said, “No, Lord, a Realized One cannot be seen by virtue of the possession of distinctive features. Why is that? What the Realized One has preached as the possession of distinctive features has been preached by the Realized One as lacking the possession of distinctive features. That is why it is called the possession of distinctive features.”⁹⁹

§21a The Lord said, “What do you think, Subhūti? Does it occur to the Realized One that he has taught the *dharma*?¹⁰⁰ Subhūti, anybody who would say such things as ‘The Tathāgata has taught the *dharma*’ would misrepresent me, Subhūti, on account of wrong learning.¹⁰¹ Why is that? As for

⁹⁴ Subhūti’s answer is omitted from G, no doubt through a scribal error of the type *saut du même au même*. We would expect the text to have something like: *āha / evam etad bhagavan bahavas te lokadhātavo bhaveyuh /*. Cf. Schopen 1989: 126, n. 16. So far this section repeats the substance of the first part of §11.

⁹⁵ G has *jānīyās*, but one would expect 1st sg. *jānīyām* here. P has *prajānāmi* (“I have insight into ...”). Cf. Schopen 1989: 127, n. 17.

⁹⁶ The word *cittam* has apparently been omitted through scribal error. Cf. Schopen 1989: 127, n. 18.

⁹⁷ Cf. §§8 & 11.

⁹⁸ Cf. §§5 and 20b.

⁹⁹ This repeats the substance of §5. See n. 39 above for an alternative reading of the compound *alākṣaṇasamṃpat*.

¹⁰⁰ G actually reads *na mayā dharmo deśita iti*: “I have not taught the *dharma*,” but *na* is to be deleted, since it is not attested by any other version, whether Sanskrit, Tibetan or Chinese. Cf. Schopen 1989: 127. To keep the negative, Schopen is forced to disregard the fact that *api nu* introduces a question (“Surely it occurs to the Tathāgata”).

¹⁰¹ Cf. Schopen 1989: 127, n. 19. I read the text as *asatā-d-udgrhītena*, and understand the sense to be that the mistaken position referred to is attributed to incorrect (*asat*) “taking up” or “learning” (*udgrhīta*) of the teachings of the Buddha—i.e. simply grasping the wrong end of the stick—not to any kind of epistemological error or false ontology, as the renditions of Conze and Schopen suggest (Conze: “he would misrepresent me by seizing on what is not there”; Schopen: “would falsely accuse me by taking something up from what is not there.”). Cf. Max Müller: “he would slander me with untruth which he has learned.” This seems to me to be closer to the mark, as also is K: “If somebody were to say the Realized One has a *dharma* which he has preached, then he would be slandering the Buddha because he is not able to understand what I have preached” (identical wording in B). Tib. (*med pa dang log par zin pas*) and Z (through what does not really exist and by wrong grasping) seem to be reading the expression in both ways at once. However, the key to the correct interpretation here, as in §6 above, is to be found in the wording of the *Alagaddūpamasutta*, the central theme of which is precisely the danger of picking the teaching up the wrong way. See,

the so-called ‘teaching of the *dharma*,’ Subhūti, there exists no *dharma* whatsoever which can be apprehended called the teaching of the *dharma*.”

§21b He said, “Can it be, Lord, that there will be any living beings at a future time who will hear such *dharmas* as these being preached and have faith in them?”

The Lord said, “Subhūti, they are not beings, nor are they non-beings. Why is that? ‘All beings,’ Subhūti, have been preached by the Realized One as beingless. That is why they are called ‘all beings.’¹⁰²

§22 “What do you think, Subhūti? Does any *dharma* at all exist to which the Realized One became fully awakened as supreme and perfect awakening?”¹⁰³

He said, “No *dharma* whatsoever exists to which the Realized One became fully awakened as supreme and perfect awakening.”¹⁰⁴

The Lord said, “Quite so, Subhūti, quite so. Not even a fine or minute (*aṇu*) *dharma* is to be found or apprehended in it. That is why it is called ‘superfine or supreme (*anuttarā*) and perfect awakening.’¹⁰⁵

§23 “However, Subhūti, that *dharma* is the same as any other (*sama*), and there is nothing at all different (*viṣama*) about it. That is why it is called ‘supreme and perfect (*samyak*) awakening.’¹⁰⁶ By virtue of being devoid of a soul,¹⁰⁷ being devoid of a living being and being devoid of a person, that supreme and perfect awakening is fully awakened to as being the same as all wholesome *dharmas*.¹⁰⁸ These so-called ‘wholesome *dharmas*,’ Subhūti, have been preached by the Realized One as being indeed *dharma*-less. That is why they are called ‘wholesome *dharmas*.’

§24 “If, however, someone were to amass piles of the seven treasures as high as all the Sumerus, kings of all mountains, in the trigalactic megagalactic world-system and give them as a gift, Subhūti, and if someone else were to do no more than learn just a four-lined verse from this Perfection of Insight and teach it to others, then the former quantity of merit, Subhūti, does not approach even a hundredth part of the latter quantity of merit *and so on, until* nor does it even permit of any analogy.¹⁰⁹

§25 “What do you think, Subhūti? Does it occur to the Realized One that he has liberated living

e.g. M.i.133: *atha ca panāyaṃ ariṭṭho bhikkhu gaddhabādhipubbo attanā duggahītena amhe c’eva abbhācikkhati attānañ ca khanati bahuñ ca apuññaṃ pasavati*. Nāṇamoli (1995: 226) translates: “But this bhikkhu Ariṭṭha, formerly of the vulture killers, *misrepresents us by his wrong grasp* and injures himself and stores up much demerit” (italics mine). Cf. *Middle Length Sayings*, Vol. I, p. 171. Pāli *attanā duggahītena* and Skt. *asatā-d-udgrhītena* are suspiciously similar phrases.

¹⁰² Cf. §§6 & 14f, which echo different parts of this section.

¹⁰³ In the ms (fol. 10a1) this question starts with the words *api tv asti*, but this should be emended to *api nv asti*, as is clearly read by P.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. §17b, which itself repeats material found in §§7 & 10a.

¹⁰⁵ The word-play here (*aṇutara* = very minute, superfine/*anuttara* = highest, supreme) is impossible to transpose into English. One could perhaps also translate “It is **utterly** devoid of even the **most** minute thing, therefore it is called **utmost** perfect awakening”

¹⁰⁶ The play on words here is between *sama* (even, level, same, regular, etc.) and *samyak* (in one or the same direction, straight, complete, right, perfect, true, etc.), probably in a Prākṛt form like *samma* or *sama*. *Viṣama* as the opposite of *sama* adds further complex nuances to the text (uneven, odd, different, wrong, rough, dangerous, inaccessible, etc.).

¹⁰⁷ P has also *nairātmēna* “on account of the absence of a self” as the first of the standard set of four terms here, which is supported by M & Cz, Tib., and all Chinese versions except B.

¹⁰⁸ This follows the interpretation chosen by Schopen, but the passage is far from straightforward. One could also translate: “Being the same as the absence of a soul, the absence of a living being and the absence of a person, that supreme and perfect awakening is fully awakened to through all wholesome things.” I.e., awakening is the same as—or is tantamount to—the realization that all things are devoid of self, living being, etc. Further, like all things, awakening itself is devoid of self, etc. Therefore it can be achieved through the cultivation of any wholesome thing or

beings? This is again not the way one should see things, Subhūti. Why is that? There is no living being whatsoever who has been liberated by the Realized One. If moreover there were any living being who was liberated by the Realized One, Subhūti, that would constitute seizing upon a self on his part, seizing upon a living being, seizing upon a soul, seizing upon a person.¹¹⁰ This ‘seizing upon a self,’ Subhūti, has been preached by the Realized One as devoid of seizing, but it is learned by foolish ordinary people. These ‘foolish ordinary people,’ Subhūti, have been preached by the Realized One as peopleless. That is why they are called ‘foolish ordinary people.’¹¹¹

§26a “What do you think, Subhūti? Can a Realized One be seen by virtue of the possession of distinctive features?”¹¹²

He said, “Quite so, Lord, a Realized One can be seen by virtue of the possession of distinctive features.”

The Lord said, “If, however, a Realized One could be seen by virtue of the possession of distinctive features, Subhūti, a wheel-turning king would also be a Realized One.”¹¹³

He said, “As I understand the meaning of what the Lord has preached, a Realized One cannot be seen by virtue of the possession of distinctive features.”

Then on that occasion the Lord uttered these verses:

“Whoever saw me through my physical form,
Whoever followed me through the sound of my voice,
Engaged in the wrong endeavours,
Those people will not see me.”¹¹⁴

§26b A Buddha is visible through the *dharma*,
A Realized One has the *dharma* for a body,
But the nature of *dharma* being unknowable by sensory consciousness,
It cannot be known by sensory consciousness.”¹¹⁵

teaching, to the point where one sees their true nature. This is what I take to be the interpretation implied in K and Tib.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. §§8, 11, 14h and especially 16b.

¹¹⁰ Cf. §§6 & 9d.

¹¹¹ I suspect a pun here on *ajana* (unpopulated, peopleless) and *ajānat* (unknowing, ignorant, witless) in a similar Prakṛt form. Cf. Pāli *ajānana*, *jāna*, etc.

¹¹² This section raises the same question dealt with in §§5, 13d & 20b, the difference being here that Subhūti answers in the affirmative and has to be corrected by the Buddha. Note the different structure of the text, however, in M, Cz, Tib., B, Z, D, X, & Y, where Subhūti gives the correct negative reply, which is what we would expect, since he has already got this question right three times. But this looks very much like a later attempt to smooth out a problem in an earlier recension of the text, since P agrees in essentials with G at this point, and so does K. All this would make much better sense if §26a were the first time this question was addressed to Subhūti, rather than the fourth.

¹¹³ P adds here *tasmād alakṣaṇasampadāyās tathāgato draṣṭavyaḥ*: “Therefore a Realized One can be seen from the non-possession of distinctive features.” Versions of this sentence also appear in D, X, & Y.

¹¹⁴ For a Pāli parallel to this verse, see *Theragāthā* 469, where it refers to those who failed to discern the true nature of the Thera Bhaddiya, misled either by his seductive voice or by his dwarfish appearance. A close Sanskrit parallel is found at *Udānavarga* XXII.12: *ye me rūpeṇa minvanti / ye me ghoṣeṇa cānvagāḥ / chandarāgavaśopetā / na mām jānanti te janāḥ* /. Boucher (forthcoming: 32, n. 19) notes how this verse also appears in the *Vimaladattā-paripṛcchā-sūtra* (Derge mDo Ca 249a6–b3) and the *Āśokadattā-vyākaraṇa-sūtra* (Derge mDo Ca 233b6–234a1) In the former text the translation runs: *gaṅ dag na la gzugs su mthoṅ // gaṅ dag na la sgrar śes pa // 'dun pa 'dod chags ldan pa ste // skye bo de dag na mi mthoṅ //*. In the latter the translation is the same, except for the third pāda (*log pas spoṅ bar žugs pa ste*). Thus the verse appears in two forms according to the wording of pāda c, one in the *Theragāthā*, *Udānavarga* and *Vimaladattā-paripṛcchā*, the other in the Vaj and the *Āśokadattā-vyākaraṇa*.

§27 “What do you think, Subhūti? Did the Realized One awaken fully to supreme and perfect awakening through the possession of distinctive features? This is again not the way one should see things, Subhūti. The Realized One did not awaken fully to supreme and perfect awakening through the possession of distinctive features.¹¹⁶

“Moreover, Subhūti, if it should be thought that those who have set out on the bodhisattva path assert the destruction of any *dharmā* or its annihilation, then once again, Subhūti, this is not the way one should see things. Those who have set out on the bodhisattva path do not assert the destruction or annihilation of any *dharmā* whatsoever.

§28 “If, however, some gentleman or lady were to fill as many world-systems as there are grains of sand in the Ganges River with the seven treasures and give them as a gift to the Realized, Worthy and Perfectly Awakened Ones, Subhūti, and if some bodhisattva were to attain acceptance with regard to the fact that *dharmas* are devoid of self,¹¹⁷ the latter would generate from that a lot more merit. However, Subhūti, the quantity of merit should not be acquired by the bodhisattva.”

He said, “Lord, should the quantity of merit be acquired?”¹¹⁸

The Lord said, “It should be acquired, Subhūti, but should not be taken up. That is why one says ‘It should be acquired.’¹¹⁹

§29 “However, Subhūti, if someone were to say that the Realized One goes or comes or stands or sits or lies down, he does not understand the meaning of what I have preached. Why is that? He who is called ‘the Realized One’ (*tathāgata*), Subhūti, has not come (*āgata*) from anywhere, nor has he gone (*gata*) anywhere. That is why he is called ‘the Realized, Worthy and Perfectly Awakened One.’

§30a “If, however, some gentleman or lady were to take as many world-systems as there are dust-particles of earth in the trigalactic megagalactic world-system, Subhūti, and grind them to

such an interpretation is obviously problematic), but to its being beyond the reach of **sensory** consciousness (*vijñāna*), which necessarily apprehends an object of some kind. Cf. Conze 1973: 136, which is certainly an improvement on Conze 1957:89. Although it does not cite this verse, the abovementioned passage in the *Vimaladattā-paripṛcchā-sūtra* throws light on its meaning when it goes on to say that the body of dharmas of the Realized Ones cannot be seen because it transcends visual consciousness (*mig gi rnam par śes pa = cakṣurvijñāna*). On the difficulties raised by the use of *dharmakāya* here, and on its correct interpretation, see Harrison 1992, esp. pp. 68–69. In the last line *sa* would be preferable to *sā*, at least from the point of view of sense, yielding the less tautological translation “He (i.e. the Buddha) cannot be known by sensory consciousness,” but the reading of the Gilgit ms is beyond doubt *sā* (not *sa* as Conze has it). Conze (1957: 57, n. 1) has pointed out relevant passages in the *Aṣṭa*.

¹¹⁶ Cf. §§5, 13d, 20b and 26a.

¹¹⁷ P adds *anutpattikeṣu*, “and devoid of arising,” so too M & Cz, Tib., and all Chinese translations except K, which reads with S.

¹¹⁸ Later Sanskrit mss add *nanu*, “surely,” to this sentence, but there is no formal indication in G as to whether Subhūti is asking a question. *Nanu* is restored by Pargiter in a gap, but we cannot be certain that P had it. All Chinese translations, however, read Subhūti’s statement as a negative question: “(Why) should the bodhisattva not acquire merit?”

¹¹⁹ An alternative interpretation would be to read the last sentence as *tenocyate ’parigrahītavyaḥ*, (“That is why one says ‘It should not be acquired.’”) in view of the fact that *avagraha* is not marked in the early mss. This is suggested by K’s translation (752a27–b2), which seems to be an attempt to interpret the underlying meaning of the passage more loosely: “This bodhisattva surpasses the previous bodhisattva [*sic*] in the merit he gets, because bodhisattvas do not acquire merit.” Subhūti addressed the Buddha saying, “World-honoured One, why do the bodhisattvas not acquire merit?” “Subhūti, bodhisattvas should not become attached to the merit they make. For this reason one says they do not acquire merit.” Furthermore, such a reading would be consistent with the normal strategy of the text, to cycle from affirmation to negation to affirmation, albeit reversed in this instance. Note that P has a gap at this point, so it may even have read *tad ucyate aparigrahētavyaḥ* (as K’s exemplar may have). All the other Chinese translations take the last sentence in the positive, reflecting the reading *tad ucyate parigrahētavyaḥ/parigrahītavyaḥ*.

powder, so that they were like, say, a pile of the most minute atoms, what do you think, Subhūti? Would that pile of the most minute atoms be considerable?"

He said, "Quite so, Lord, that pile of the most minute atoms would be considerable. Why is that? If, Lord, there were a pile, the Lord would not say 'pile of the most minute atoms.' Why is that? Any pile of the most minute atoms which has been preached has been preached as pile-less by the Lord. That is why it is called 'a pile of the most minute atoms.'¹²⁰

§30b "And whenever the Realized One preaches about a 'trigalactic megagalactic world-system,' that has been preached by the Realized One as systemless. That is why it is called 'a trigalactic megagalactic world-system.' Why is that? If, Lord, there were a system, that, Lord, would indeed constitute seizing upon a solid mass, yet what the Realized One has preached of as seizing upon a solid mass, that has been preached by the Realized One as devoid of any seizing. That is why it is called 'seizing upon a solid mass.'"

The Lord said, "And yet seizing upon something solid is a *dharma* which is beyond linguistic expression, Subhūti, which is ineffable.¹²¹ It has been taken up by foolish ordinary people.

§31a "Why is that? If someone were to say, Subhūti, that the Realized One preached the view of a self, the view of a living being, the view of a soul, the view of a person, would he be saying the right thing by saying that, Subhūti?"

He said, "No, Lord. Why is that? Any view of a self, Lord, preached of by the Realized One has been preached by the Realized One as viewless. That is why it is called 'a view of a self.'"

§31b The Lord said, "It is in this way, Subhūti, that one who has set out on the bodhisattva path should know all *dharmas* and have faith in them. But he should have faith in them in such a way that even the idea of a *dharma* does not come to be present. Why is that? This so-called 'idea of a *dharma*,' Subhūti, has been preached by the Realized One as idealess. That is why it is called the 'idea of a *dharma*.'

§32a "If, however, any bodhisattva and mahāsattva were to fill immeasurable and incalculable world-systems with the seven treasures and make a gift of them, Subhūti, and if some gentleman or lady were to do no more than learn just a four-lined verse from this Perfection of Insight and memorize it, teach it, and master it,¹²² the latter would generate from that a lot more merit, an immeasurable and incalculable amount.¹²³ And how should he elucidate it?¹²⁴ So as not to throw light on it. That is why one says 'he should elucidate it.'

A shooting star, a clouding of the sight, a lamp,
An illusion, a drop of dew, a bubble,
A dream, a lightning's flash, a thunder cloud—
This is the way one should see the conditioned."

¹²⁰ Cf. §13c.

¹²¹ P reads *vyavahāro*, which accords with the interpretation followed by Conze (1973: 138) contra his own edition and Conze 1957/1974: 91. So too apparently does Tib. K & B appear to lack any equivalent for (*a*)*vyavahāra*, while D & X clearly read *avyavahāra*, Z & Y *vyavahāra*.

¹²² All other versions of the text, whether Sanskrit, Chinese or Tibetan, attest to the addition here of *parebhyaś ca vistareṇa samprakāsayet* ("and elucidate it in full for others"), that is, to the filling out of the standard list of verbal actions connected with texts. Note that this longer list is given only once in S, in §15a.

¹²³ Cf. §§8, 11, 13e, 15a–b, 16a–c, 19, 24.

¹²⁴ This question presupposes the prior occurrence of this term at the end of the list of recommended actions. See note 122 above. Cf. also §15c, where the verb *prakāś-* is also used (there also translated as "elucidate").

§32b This is what the Lord said. Delighted, the Elder Subhūti, those monks, nuns, male lay followers, female lay followers, and the whole world with its gods, humans, anti-gods and gandharvas rejoiced at what the Lord had preached.

The *Vajracchedikā Prajñāpāramitā* is concluded.