

Anālayo, *The Genesis of the Bodhisattva Ideal* [Hamburg Buddhist Studies 1] (Hamburg: Hamburg University Press, Verlag der Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Hamburg Carl von Ossietzky, 2010), 178 pp., €22,80, ISBN 978 3 937 81662 3. Available for free download at http://hup.sub.uni-hamburg.de/purl/HamburgUP_HBS01_Analayo, and urn:nbn:de:gbv:18-3-1036.

The Center for Buddhist Studies at the University of Hamburg has initiated its publication series with a fine volume by the German-born monk Ven. Anālayo, to whom we are already in debt for an impressive number of high quality studies focused mostly on what can be learned by confronting Pāli Nikāya texts with Chinese parallels, with due consideration given to materials extant in Sanskrit and Tibetan as well. In this study, the author begins with a simple question, yet one which appears not to have been asked before, at least in Western scholarship, namely: how did the basic idea of the bodhisattva come into existence? As Anālayo puts it (11), “My frame of reference is that of the thought-world of the early Buddhist discourses themselves, whose perspective forms the point of departure for my attempt to collect indications relevant to the genesis of the bodhisattva ideal.” He outlines his project, divided into three chapters, as follows: 1) Gautama as a Bodhisattva, 2) Meeting the Previous Buddha, 3) The Advent of the Next Buddha. In other words, the book attempts to trace, on the basis of the earliest possible texts, how Gautama as bodhisattva is imagined, his relations with (a) previous buddha(s), and how Maitreya as buddha-to-be (and thus, at present, bodhisattva) is imagined.

The author’s theoretical starting point with regard to his sources is stated as follows (12): “When, on comparison, parallel versions of an early discourse differ, at least one of them must have suffered from some alteration or error. Though in this way different textual layers can be discerned [...] as a whole this corpus of early discourses nevertheless does seem to contain the earliest layer of Buddhist textual activity and thus has the potential of taking us back to the beginnings of Buddhist thought, in as much as it has left its traces in literature.” Although some question may be raised with respect to the first assertion, which assumes, as I read it, that there is *one* original version of a given discourse, in practice this aspect of the author’s historical credulity does not create any problems for his study. (This is not the place to enter into a discussion of this issue, but briefly put: my own assumption is that, even if we take the Buddhist tradition more or less at its word and assume that early sūtras record the words of the Buddha, there is ever reason to imagine that multiple versions of ‘the same’ basic text were in circulation from the very beginning. To imagine this in an emic frame work, we might think of the Buddha wandering hither and yon, preaching. He would have delivered the same message repeatedly, but surely not in the same words. Thus, unless we assume the historicity of a council at which alternate versions of ‘the same’ discourse were

filtered so that only one single authorized version was put into circulation, the scenario of multiple parallel versions from the very beginning seems to me the most likely one. Needless to say, a less ‘pious’ version which imagines other means of scripture production makes a similar scenario of parallel developments equally plausible as well).

To turn to the book at hand, in its first section, Anālayo takes up the question of the meaning of the term ‘bodhisattva’ (when, as in this case, the terminology or spelling differs between Sanskrit and Pāli, unless it is necessary to distinguish the author wisely simply sticks to Sanskrit to avoid a hodge-podge). Pinpointing what he terms the “before awakening phrase,” used in the texts by the Buddha to refer to times before his awakening, he associates this phrase with three themes (16): the bodhisattva’s overcoming of unwholesome states of mind; his development of mental tranquillity; and the growth of his insight. He concludes (19) that the texts present Gautama as a bodhisattva in the sense of a being ‘in search of awakening.’ Next turning to Gautama’s motivation, he makes the very interesting discovery that little if any attention is paid to concern for others as a motivation for the search for awakening. As the author states (25), “when reflecting on the possibility of sharing his discovery with others, according to a range of sources the Buddha considered the matter entirely from the perspective of how it would affect himself.” He goes on then to observe (26–27) that “the early Buddhist conception of the bodhisattva’s motivation did not allot a prominent role to compassionate teaching activity for the sake of delivering others, a quality that only becomes evident after the bodhisattva has reached awakening and decided to teach. [...] in the early discourses compassion for others appears to be a result of awakening. [...] In sum, in early Buddhist thought the compassionate impulse to become active for the sake of others was associated with the Buddha as well as with arhats and those who aspire to become arhats, but was not seen as a quality that motivated the bodhisattva’s quest for awakening.”

The author next turns his attentions to “Gautama’s Marvelous Qualities,” suggesting that descriptions of the Buddha would have enabled followers in a time after his death to visualize his characteristics. Concerning the miracles around his birth, Anālayo observes that (42–43) “In the Pāli discourses in general, the claim that this is one’s last birth etc. is invariably a statement made after someone has reached full awakening. [...] it seems safe to conclude that when these descriptions of the Buddha’s awakening came into being, the idea had not yet arisen that already at his birth he knew that this was going to be his last birth. In other words, the proclamation made by the infant bodhisattva in the *Acchariyabbhuta-dhamma-sutta* involves a clear shift of a claim, originally made after awakening, to the time when the bodhisattva Gautama had just been born.” Therefore, he concludes, (44) “the bodhisattva’s announcement of having reached the last birth and his proclamation of being foremost in the world reflect a clear change in the

conception of the nature of the bodhisattva.” This is followed immediately by an interesting suggestion:

An inevitable outcome of this shift of perspective is that the bodhisattva’s progress to awakening [...] loses importance. Once Gautama is already accomplished at birth, the stages of his progress must necessarily have taken place earlier, that is, in some former life or lives. An evident expression of this shift of perspective in the *Acchariyabbhuta-dhamma-sutta* itself is its employment of the term bodhisattva for the previous life of the Buddha in Tuṣita, whereas in the discourses surveyed earlier the same term was only used in relation to his last life as a human.

The second section of the book deals with the bodhisattva’s vow, with a focus on the meeting between Gautama and the former buddha Kāśyapa. Considerable attention is given to the jātaka genre, and the question of depictions of the buddha-to-be as an animal or human, with the conclusion (63) that “in the thought-world of the early discourses the Buddha’s former lives usually involve human rebirths instead of rebirth as an animal, making it more probable that the tale of the harmonious living together of these animals was originally not meant to record former experiences of the bodhisattva.” While it is not a new view to conclude (71) that there is “a tendency for parables and similes to become *jātakas* by identifying one of their protagonists with the bodhisattva,” it is important that this has now been investigated in this diachronically careful fashion. The author next turns to the story of Gautama’s first meeting with Kāśyapa, and the possible evolution of this tale, along with its revealing logic, namely that the buddha-to-be is by no means an obvious hero. Comparing a number of sources, an evolution is detected toward the decision to set out for buddhahood being pushed further and further into the past. Three main stages are identified (88):

1. That of the *Ghaṭikāra-sutta* and its *Madhyama-āgama* parallel, in which the bodhisattva Gautama is simply identified with a young Brahmin who goes forth under the Buddha Kāśyapa.
2. That represented by the *Madhyama-āgama*, in which this meeting inspires the bodhisattva to take a vow to become a Buddha himself.
3. That in which the bodhisattva’s meeting with the Buddha Kāśyapa serves to reconfirm his impending Buddhahood through a prediction, as his decision to pursue Buddhahood has already been taken much earlier.

The second stage here is accorded special importance as it (92) “lays a crucial foundation for the emergence of the bodhisattva ideal.” However, a problem remains for the construction of the picture of the bodhisattva idea (93): “Still missing in the development surveyed so far within the textual corpus of the early discourses is the idea of a prediction of future Buddhahood given by a

Buddha to an aspiring bodhisattva. Among the early discourses, a record of Gautama receiving such a prediction is not found. Nevertheless, the missing piece in the puzzle can be discovered within the same textual corpus, namely in another discourse in the *Madhyama-āgama*. In this discourse, the Buddha Gautama gives such a prediction to Maitreya, the next Buddha to arise in the future.”

The third and final portion of the book discusses this very issue, namely the connection with Maitreya. After some consideration of the idea of the cakravartin and the mythology of the decline of human life and its resurgence, with a comparison of three versions of a text, from the *Dīgha-Nikāya*, *Dirgha-Āgama* and *Madhyama-Āgama*, the author demonstrates that the presence of Maitreya in the first two of these accounts must be a late addition. He introduces another text from the same *Madhyama-Āgama*, the *Shuoben jing* 說本經, arguing that these two texts (115) “testify to different moments in the development of a tale”. He identifies the stages as three:

1. in the *Madhyama-āgama*, the future realm of the cakravartin is described without reference to Maitreya.
2. in the *Dīgha-nikāya* and *Dirgha-āgama*, the future advent of Maitreya has become part of the narration.
3. in the the *Shuoben jing* the description of the advent of the future Buddha Maitreya becomes the occasion for a listener to aspire to becoming a buddha at that future time.

The movement he describes as follows (118):

This involves a shift from a retrospective perspective prevalent in the conception of a bodhisattva representing former experiences of the present or past Buddhas to a forward perspective: a monk disciple of the present Buddha will in future become a Buddha. Though this shift is a logical consequence of the notion of multiple Buddhas, it is only once this shift has taken place that the bodhisattva conception can become an ideal to be emulated by others.

The author concludes his survey by observing (129) that “the basic ingredients of the bodhisattva ideal” include: “the generic notion of a bodhisattva, the idea that a bodhisattva is inevitably destined to reach awakening, the notion that a bodhisattva takes a vow to pursue the path to Buddhahood, and the prediction a bodhisattva receives from a former Buddha.” He sees here (130) a gradual apotheosis of the Buddha, starting with the attribution of marvels and concern with predecessors and successor(s), indeed this conclusion being reflected in the overall structure of the study.

Although there is little here that is dramatic, precisely in its calm and careful manner, with a high sensitivity to philological accuracy (not coincidentally, perhaps, the hallmark of the Hamburg school of Buddhist Studies) the study of

Ven. Anālayo convincingly paints a picture of the development of the idea of the bodhisattva in the earliest Buddhist sources to which we now have access. It is a pleasure to welcome this fine work.

I have only a few remarks to add, more in the way of suggestions than criticism. The author, as mentioned above, makes excellent use of materials in Pāli, Sanskrit, Chinese and Tibetan. However, as he states, he is not able to read Japanese. The question of the origins of the bodhisattva idea has in fact been discussed by Japanese scholars, although not in precisely the same fashion as Anālayo has gone about it. However, it would certainly be beneficial in future to consider in the first place the studies of Kanbayashi Ryūjō 神林隆淨, a work of more than 500 pages on the idea of the bodhisattva (*Bosatsu shisō no kenkyū* 菩薩思想の研究, Tokyo: Morie Shoten 森江書店, 1939), and later on Hikata Ryūshō 干潟龍祥, who published a study of the Jātakas within which he discussed the origins of the bodhisattva idea: *Honshōkyōrui no shisōshiteki kenkyū* 本生経類の思想史的研究. Tōyō Bunko ronsō 東洋文庫論叢 Series A 35. Tokyo: Tōyō Bunko 東洋文庫, 1954. His main points were repeated in his “Bosatsu shisō no kigen to tenkai” 菩薩思想の起源と展開, in Miyamoto Shōson 宮本正尊, ed., *Bukkyō no Konpon Shinri: Bukkyō ni okeru konpon shinri no rekishiteki shokeitai* 仏教の根本真理—仏教における根本真理の歴史的諸形態 (Tokyo: Sansedō, 三省堂, 1957): 219–240. It is not possible to enter into a comparison of the work of these Japanese scholars and Anālayo, but it may suffice to say that while they have anticipated him in some respects, neither Kanbayashi nor Hikata have offered the type of comprehensive, detailed and careful comparative study that we find now in Anālayo’s book.

The volume is equipped with a very simple index. It is not clear what it is meant to provide. Moreover, the absence of an Index Locorum is an significant lacuna. A great many passages are discussed in detail, and often useful philological suggestions offered. As it is, every reader will have to dig these out individually, or more likely, overlook them. As one example, on p. 100n16, Anālayo refers to SHT V 1334 R3, which reads (*da*)*śavarṣāyusām manuṣyāmnām pam[ca]*. As he remarks, “the editors in note 2 [suggest] that the lifespan diminishes to five years. This need not be the case, as the reference may well be to the five years (or five months in the Chinese versions) at which women become marriageable, which comes in all versions immediately after mentioning the lifespan of ten years,” then going on to cite DN III 71,15 *dasavassāyukesu bhikkhave manussesu pañcavassikā kumārīkā alampateyyā bhavissanti*, its Chinese parallel at T. 1 (I) 41a12, 十歲時人, 女生五月便行嫁, and *Madhyamāgama* at T. 26 (I) 523a12, 人壽十歲時, 女生五月即便出嫁.

Finally, I take the liberty to offer a few additional notes:

17n6 and elsewhere: In translating Chinese *wei* 未, Anālayo renders “not [yet].” There are certainly cases in Classical Chinese where *wei* simply has the

function of a bare negation, but alone it indeed often—it is my impression that at least in Buddhist translations, usually—means “not yet.” Therefore, the brackets are not necessary.

18n9: Quoting the Pāli from MN III 157,29 *pubbe va sambodhā anabhisambuddho bodhisatto va samāno* and AN IV 302,8 *pubbāhaṃ sambodhā anabhisambuddho bodhisatto va samāno*, the author points to the respective parallels at T I 536c19 and T I 539b22, quoting 我本未得覺無上正真道時, which he translates “formerly, at the time when I had not [yet] attained awakening to the unsurpassable, right and true path.” The author is extremely well informed about the *Majjhima-Nikāya* and its Chinese parallel in the *Madhyama-Āgama*, having produced a massive comparative study (*A Comparative Study of the Majjhima-nikāya*. Taipei: Dharma Drum Publishing, 2011). However, I suggest that, at least in terms of the intention of the original translators, here 道 should be understood as a rendering of ‘bodhi’ rather than in the sense of ‘path.’ See for example DĀ T. 1 (I) 36c24–25 (*juan* 6): 今我無上正真道中不須種姓, in which the Buddha states that he needs no caste since he is perfectly awakened. This exact issue is in fact discussed by Karashima Seishi 辛嶋静志 in Okayama Hajime 丘山新, Kamitsuka Yoshiko 神塚淑子, Karashima Seishi, Kanno Hiroshi 菅野博史, Sueki Fumihiko 末木文美士, Hikita Hiromichi 引田弘道, and Matsumura Takumi 松村巧, *Gendaigoyaku Agon Kyōten: Jōagonkyō Dai-nikan* 現代語訳阿含經典 長阿含經 第 2 卷 (Tokyo: Hirakawa shuppansha 平河出版, 1997): 278n29, who describes 無上正真道 as an ‘old translation’ of *anuttara-samyak-sambodhi*. How Chinese readers would have understood this translation is a separate question.

19n18: The author discusses the hypothesis that the element °*satta* in *bodhisatta*, Sanskritized as °*sattva*, might go back rather to an original *°*sakta*. He quotes several interesting pieces of evidence, and then lists a number of modern scholars who have discussed the question, ending with the recent comments of von Hinüber (*ZDMG* 157 [2007] 389). What he does not do is note that von Hinüber concluded as follows: “Denn die Auflösung des Kompositums *bodhisattva* ‘Erleuchtungswesen’ führt zu erheblichen, wenn nicht unlösbaren Problemen, die sich nur durch einen Blick auf die buddhistischen Exegese zu dem Worte *satta* < sanskr. *satva* aufheben lassen, die ihre Wurzeln in der Zeit der mittelindischen buddhistischen Sprachen hatte.” If one trusts this, much of Anālayo’s note is reduced to demonstrating that traditional scholars were at a loss as to the genuine historical background of the term, and many modern scholars added little constructive to the discussion.

20n19: translating *abbhokāso pabbajjā*, Anālayo offers “going forth is [like emerging] out in the open.” I am not certain that this expression must be made into a simile, for the very notion of leaving the home early in the tradition presumably, in line with an ideal ideology, is that indeed one lives and sleeps in

the open, without any roof. Hence going forth is, quite literally, to be out in the open. Whether or not this was ever the way monks actually lived, I believe that it was promoted as an ideal. In any event, the question might be fruitfully explored.

21n23: the word printed *pariyeseyyav* should of course be read *pariyeseyyam*. It is remarkable that this is, in fact, the only misprint in Pāli or Sanskrit that I noticed in the book.

31n51: One might usefully add to the references to studies relevant to the birth of the Buddha Minoru Hara's paper "Right in India and Left in China? On I-ching's translation of the Sudhanakumāravadāna." In S.D. Joshi, ed., *Amṛta-dhārā, Prof. R.N. Dandekar Felicitation Volume* (Poona, 1984): 159–166.

56n3: In regard to the translation of the Vessantajāṭaka, although the translation itself is the work of Margaret Cone, the introduction, quoted here, is to be credited to Richard Gombrich.

77: Regarding the implications of grabbing hair in Ancient India, it is amusing to recall the moment in the dramatic farce *Mattavilāsa* when, involved in a fight, the Buddhist monk is grabbed by the woman Devasomā who, however, is unable to take hold of his hair since his head is shaved. The monk exclaims *agham buddhassa viñṇāṇaṃ jeṇa muṇḍanaṃ diṭṭhaṃ*, translated by David Lorenzen (*Tantra in Practice*, 91) "How wise was the Buddha since he foresaw the need to have a shaven head."

82n86: The rendering "I saw an ancient path, where former Buddhas had passed by" for 見古昔諸佛所遊行處 seems to confuse the 道 of the preceding quotation; here 處 is rather 'place,' not 'path.'

84n89: A slight grammatical lapse: for "I and him" read "He and I" and for 彼與我親友, not "he was a friend with me" but "He and I were friends."

130n2: I do not see the point of quoting a number of authors who all say the same thing, that in itself also not very interesting. Elsewhere too the author displays a slight tendency to quote the opinions of not always very well informed critics. A bit more economy in this respect would not be out of order.

Although the author is not a native speaker of English, the writing is throughout clear and generally precise, and the production very good; the few minor misprints which have slipped through can be easily corrected by the reader, and need not be noted.

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