

Chung-Hwa Buddhist Journal (2011, 24:121-194)

Taipei: Chung-Hwa Institute of Buddhist Studies

中華佛學學報第二十四期 頁121-194 (民國一百年) · 臺北：中華佛學研究所

ISSN:1017-7132

Mahāmaitrī in a Mahāyāna Sūtra in Khotanese — Continuity and Innovation in Buddhist Meditation

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Abstract

This article is a study of loving kindness meditation as presented in the third chapter of the Khotanese *Book of Zambasta* in the light of its Chinese parallel, the *Da fanguang fo huayan jing xiuci fen* 大方廣佛華嚴經修慈分 (T 306), a *Buddhāvataṃsaka* (*Fo huayan* 佛華嚴) work. Chapter three is first assessed in relationship to the structure and content of the *Book of Zambasta*. It is then analyzed in terms of its meditation dynamics and dialectics, against its philosophical background of objectless loving kindness (Skt. *anālaṃbana-maitrī*) and non-conceptual knowledge (Skt. *nirvikalpaka-jñāna*). The peculiarity of the meditation practice in question is a marked emphasis on the conceptual and visual aspects integrated with the use of the four elements and particles of physical matter as the basis for a loving kindness suffusion. Aspects of both continuity and innovation with respect to earlier Buddhist traditions are taken into account, as well as an example of four elements meditation as taught in a contemporary Burmese Theravāda tradition. The practice is described in the Khotanese text as one of ‘great loving kindness’ (Skt. *mahāmaitrī*): the soteriological implications of this statement and the way the Mahāyāna goal and vision inform practical aspects of meditation are explored, and elements pointing to doctrinal compatibility of the text with a Sarvāstivāda/Yogācāra milieu are also singled out.

Keywords:

Book of Zambasta, *Buddhāvataṃsaka*, Four Elements, Great Loving Kindness, Khotanese Buddhism.

由于闡之大乘經典談大慈— 佛教禪修的延續與創新

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摘要

此篇論文討論于闡文《贊巴斯塔之書》第三章有關慈心的研究，此章相當於佛華嚴經中之《大方廣佛華嚴經修慈分》。首先它檢視了《贊巴斯塔之書》的結構與內文的關係，並分析其禪修與辨證關係，以對應其無緣慈與無分別智的哲學背景。此禪修特質的問題在於強調思惟與觀想方面，整合四大的運用及極微作為慈心的基礎。同時考量早期佛教傳統的延續與創新，以現代緬甸的南傳傳統禪修四大為例；于闡文本中以大慈心說明此修行，由此探究此教法的解脫意涵、修行的大乘目標及禪修觀想之道，並指出文本中與說一切有部或瑜伽行派在教義上之相容元素。

關鍵字：《贊巴斯塔之書》、佛華嚴、四大、大慈心、于闡佛教。

I. Introduction¹

This article focuses on loving kindness (Khot. *maitrā*-, Skt. *maitrī* and also *maitrā*) meditation as described in a text preserved as the third chapter of the Khotanese *Book of Zambasta* (ca. mid-fifth century),² which has a Chinese parallel, the *Da fangguang fo huayan jing xiuci fen* 大方廣佛華嚴經修慈分 (T 306), a *Buddhāvataṃsaka* (*Fo huayan* 佛華嚴) work that was translated by the Khotanese monk *Devendraprajña 提雲般若 at the end of the seventh century.

Like its fellows in the *Book of Zambasta*, chapter three bears no title. It presents itself as a discourse (sūtra) in which the Buddha, requested by the Bodhisattva Maitreya, gives a teaching on loving kindness. The practice is portrayed as an approach to realisation in a Mahāyāna setting, and begins with the contemplation of the four elements of the body.

Fifth-century Central Asia marked a significant juncture in the history of Buddhist meditative traditions, above all in their transmission from India to China and beyond. Central Asia is sometimes held to have been a focal area for both the translation and the production of meditation texts and for a wealth of related artistic and iconographic developments, including the diffusion of complexes of meditation caves. The circulation of visualisation sūtras (*guan jing* 觀經) in the form of Mahāyāna discourses and of meditation manuals (*chan jing* 禪經) based on the framework of earlier meditative approaches,³ together provided a textual basis

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- 1 This article is a revised version of a chapter of my PhD thesis (*Studies on the Book of Zambasta*, University of Naples, 2010). I presented it at the conference “Meditative Traditions of East Asia” held at National Tsing Hua University and Dharma Drum Buddhist College, Taiwan, October 29th-31st, 2009. The article is rather long and complex, in that it covers different phases and aspects of Buddhist thought and practice, thus equally long is the list of those to whom I am indebted for comments and corrections: Bhikkhu Anālayo, Dorji Wangchuk, Bhikkhu Gavesako, Mauro Maggi, Jan Nattier, Peter Skilling, Vincent Tournier, Stefano Zacchetti and the reviewers of the *Chung-Hwa Buddhist Journal*. I am especially grateful for the last minute help I received from Funayama Tōru 船山 徹, who cleared up some of my doubts and saved me from some mistakes, and from Antonello Palumbo, who brought to my attention the presence of the *brahmapuṇya* formula in chapter three of the *Book of Zambasta* and in its Chinese parallel. Any remaining errors are however my own responsibility. Throughout this article, for the sake of readability, in quoting text editions I have on occurrence standardised the transliterations, adjusted the punctuation, capitalised proper names, etc. All translations are mine unless otherwise indicated.
 - 2 The *Book of Zambasta* has been dated from the mid-fifth century by Maggi (2004a) on palaeographic grounds, and this dating is now confirmed by Sander (2009); cf. also Martini (2011, forthcoming).
 - 3 As far as this genre of texts devoted to the presentation and elucidation of spiritual cultivation is concerned, Deleanu (2006, 157) notes that “there is no traditional Indian term denoting this genre. The Chinese Buddhists, faced with an impressive number of such translations (as well as apocrypha), coined terms like *chan jing* 禪經 ‘meditation scripture’, *chan dian* 禪典 ‘meditation writ’, or *chan yao* 禪要 ‘meditation summary’. This large output is quite natural for

for the establishment of rich cultures of meditation or mental cultivation. These had important ramifications for the development of Buddhist meditation practices *en route* from the Indian and Indianised Buddhist world to China.

Chapter three of the *Book of Zambasta* was probably translated into Khotanese from an Indian language, as we will see below, and is one among many meditation texts that were transmitted in Central Asia in the fifth and sixth centuries. Most of these meditation texts, dating from roughly the first to the sixth centuries, cannot be univocally pinned down to either the Śrāvakayāna or the Mahāyāna traditions.⁴ Many of these works are preserved in Chinese translations, but some of them, found and perhaps composed in Central Asia, survive in Sanskrit.⁵ To some extent, the milieu of yogācāra *bhikṣus* (and perhaps also yogācāra *bhikṣuṇīs*) as communities of practicing, meditating yogins and ascetics,⁶ represented the setting for “a rapprochement between the two Vehicles”, which “was under way in some ascetic milieus in India and Central Asia”,⁷ testifying to a blend of earlier and more developed techniques and doctrines. The religious ideologies and dynamics in operation were however complex and variegated, as indicated, for example, by the many polemical passages of the *Book of Zambasta* where a strong, self-conscious and exclusive Mahāyāna identity is affirmed, showing that tension and conflict coexisted with integration and religious cohabitation.

An emphasis on the marvellous qualities of the Buddha and their recollection (*buddhānusmṛti*) is already attested in the corpus of the *Nikāyas/Āgamas*.⁸ The glorification of

a religion in which meditation was a paramount spiritual concern”.

4 See Yamabe (2009).

5 For the Sanskrit fragments, see Schlingloff (1964) with corrections to the text in Hartmann et al. (2006, 305-307), Seyfort-Ruegg (1967), Hartmann (1987, 2006a, 2006b and 2006c), and Yamabe (1997 and 2006); on the Chinese translations Démierville (1954, 339-363); on meditative visualisation practices in sixth-century Northeastern China Williams (2005); on visualisation sūtras, especially the *Guan wu liang shou fo jing* 觀無量壽佛經, **Amitāyurdhyāna-sūtra* (T 1753), Pas (1977); in relation to iconographies, see e.g., Abe (1991) and Yamabe (2002 and 2004); on the significance of the so-called *Yogalehrbuch* in relation to Chinese meditation texts Yamabe (1999a and 1999b); on the link between visualisation and repentance practices, and especially between visions as validation of one’s repentance and self-ordination in the *Fanwang jing* 梵網經 and in Indian and Central Asian antecedents, see Yamabe (2005) and Funayama (1995). A survey of this literature is found in Yamabe (1999b, 39-114). The discussion of divergent theories concerning the formation and status of the *Sūtra on the Ocean-like Samādhi of the Visualisation of the Buddha*, *Guanfo sanmei hai jing* 觀佛三昧海經 (T 643), in Yamabe (1999b, 115-124) is useful to assess the problem of the genesis and redaction of this literature in general. A recent study of the development of the traditional practice of the four establishments of mindfulness in sixth-century China as presented in Huisi’s 慧思 (515-577 AD) meditation texts is found in Ching-wei Wang (2009). See also Soper (1959), the work of reference on early Buddhist art in China in the light of the relevant literary evidence.

6 See Silk (1997 and 2000).

7 Deleanu (2006, 217, 94n). Seyfort-Ruegg (1967, 162, 18n) similarly remarks that meditators might have “bridged the gap separating the two Yānas”.

8 On these themes, see Harrison (1978, 1990 and especially 1992), Gethin (2006, 93-102), Yamabe

the Buddha(s), the prominence placed on their supernatural, omniscient and quasi omnipotent qualities, and the emphasis on the (meta-)physical characteristics of their bodies provided sources of immense empowerment that could be accessed in visualisations and other forms of recollection. These developments and possibilities were to gradually change not just the concept of the Buddha(s), but also the very way the meditative path is theoretically and practically articulated in order to lead to the goal of liberation. And this goal was, eventually, universally re-determined in what is known as the Mahāyāna as the attainment of Buddhahood rather than arhatship. The visual aspect and thereby the accessibility of marks-cum-causes, the *nimittas* of Buddhahood, not only embodied the salvific goal, but also afforded an important means of attaining it.

It is thus only natural that the physical and mental Buddhist *œcumene* of the time would reflect such changes on a rather grandiose scale in terms of art and material culture as well as literature, religion, philosophy and meditation. For example, the first manifestations, iconographically speaking, that reflect such a prominence of the visual can be found in sites in Indianised Afghanistan and Central Asia,⁹ whereas back in India and the Peshawar valley such manifestations are apparent to a considerably lesser degree.¹⁰

(1999b, 125-184), including a detailed discussion of the terms *nian fo* 念佛 (*buddhānusmṛti*) and *jian fo* 見佛 (*buddhadarśana*) in Indian and Chinese sources), and, especially from the perspective of the early discourses Anālayo (2010).

- 9 For example, iconographic depictions of meditation on death are found in Kizil (north-west of Kucha, present-day Uighur Autonomous Region, Xinjiang, dating ca. to the end of the fifth century), where a meditating monk is portrayed sitting in front of a human skull, see Grünwedel (1920, pls. XVII-XVIII, 4), Waldschmidt (1925, 27b), Bussagli (1963, 68), and Rowland (1974, 152, fig. 67). In the underground room at Haḍḍa (present-day Afghanistan) which served as a meditation crypt, a skeleton is represented amidst the Buddha's ten disciples, see Tarzi (1974-1976, 405-408, fig. 22); for an interpretation, see Verardi (1991, 35-36, 59n). A class of objects related to meditation on death is represented by stucco skeletons and skulls and painted skulls on scrolls. On the Central Asian iconographic evidence, see also Quagliotti (2007, 249-250). For descriptions of meditation on the corpse, see, e.g., the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta*, MN 10 at MN I 58, 9ff, or *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna-sutta*, DN 22 at DN II 295, 6ff. Here a practice of visualisation is entailed, but the visual does not take precedence over the reflective aspect, and a concrete method of visualisation is not provided (with further explanations given in the *Visuddhimagga*, ed. Warren (1950, 151-152). In the *Śrāvakabhūmi*, ed. Shukla (1973, 416), where the method of grasping and holding on to visual images (*nimittam udgrhāṇa*) of the decomposing corpse is described in greater detail. Greene (2006) discusses the developments towards the visual both in technique and scope in the Chinese *Āgamas* and North Indian Abhidharma texts.
- 10 To take representations of death again as an example, Taddei (1979, 406-407) notes that as a matter of fact, no Gandharan schist relief appears to refer to any kind of meditation on death, and that death makes its appearance in Gandharan schist reliefs only in one of the four encounters and in *parinirvāṇa* scenes, that is, in purely narrative contexts: “The devotee is not entreated to concentrate upon the object of meditation, he is only informed that Siddhārtha did concentrate upon it and drew such and such consequences from his reflections, or that the Master died in such and such circumstances; apart from variants which may have a great importance from an ideological point of view, the Encounter with the Dead – as it is narrated in Gandhāran

A ‘visual’ path to Buddhahood is also a central characteristic of chapter three of the *Book of Zambasta*, and the same holds for the two other chapters that deal with meditation, in this case meditation on the impure (chapters twenty and twenty-one).

In what follows, I first examine the function played by chapter three within the overall structure of the *Book of Zambasta*, in relation to the other chapters on meditation found in this work (Parts II and II.1). Afterwards, I survey its content in the light of the *Xiuci fen* 修慈分 (T 306), its Chinese parallel (Part II.2), and discuss the textual relationship between the two versions, against the background of the transmission of the *Buddhāvataṃsaka* in Khotan (Part III). In the final part of the article I turn to the doctrinal scheme at the background of the instructions on loving kindness. To conclude, I discuss aspects of continuity and innovation in terms of meditation theory and practice that are displayed by chapter three with respect to the earlier Buddhist traditions (Parts IV and V).

Before moving on to the main part of my study, I need to ask for the reader’s patience with its length and digressions. Because the study of Khotanese Buddhist texts was began (at the end of the nineteenth century) by Indologists and Iranists, and the discipline has been continued by scholars who are linguists and comparative philologists by education, a lot of new research and information has to be brought in to study and present any Khotanese text from the point of view of its doctrinal, Buddhist content, and of the wider textual and religio-historical network it belongs to. The challenges are many and I am aware that this is only an imperfect, but necessary, attempt.

reliefs – does not contain in itself any appeal to the onlooker for a meditation on death through an iconographical approach. What we have in Gandhāran schist reliefs is of a much more rationalistic (though elementary) than emotional character... A change is certainly noticeable when we proceed from Gandhāran to Central Asian art, but it is also probable that some relatively late Gandhāran iconographies foreshadow the ‘Central Asian’ attitude towards the representation of death ... [There] can hardly be any hesitation in seeing an effective stimulus to meditation in such representations as the skeletons of Hadda”. As to Northern Silk Road sites, it is worth mentioning that in a recent article presenting the preliminary conclusions of a study of the caves complex of Kucha based on archaeological, textual and art-historical analysis carried out together with Giuseppe Vignato, Angela F. Howard (2007, 80) comes to the conclusion that whereas the smaller, unadorned cells of the Kucheans sites were indeed individual meditation caves, the mural paintings of the decorated rooms rather than aimed at enhancing meditation would be a record of meditative experiences. Such a possibility “runs counter to the generally held opinion that cave paintings were acting as meditation aids”, and Vignato and Howard’s preliminary findings seem to indicate that “the cliff temples of Kucha, notwithstanding their being rooted in the Indic context, were highly independent; moreover, they were indigenous to the Buddhist communities living in this small kingdom on the northern stretch of the Silk Road” and that the way Kucha monks used their caves was not affected by Chinese practices, in spite of the fact that their respective development was contemporary”.

II. Chapter Three and the Other Meditation Chapters of the *Book of Zambasta*

As I mentioned earlier, the *Book of Zambasta* is thought to date from approximately the mid-fifth century, and it thus has its place – chronologically and geographically – at a crucial crossroad in the transmission and transformation of Buddhist meditative traditions from India to China.¹¹ The *Book of Zambasta*, a composite collection extremely wide in scope and purpose, provides a comprehensive gateway to the teachings of the Buddha from a Mahāyāna perspective. It is probably both the earliest Khotanese work ever written and the earliest Mahāyāna work composed in Khotanese vernacular, possibly antedating the earliest Khotanese translations of Mahāyāna scriptures. It must have constituted an invaluable work of reference for Khotanese Buddhists. It supplemented the Khotanese oral commentary on Indian texts that would have been the main means of instruction in early Khotan. This oral explanation lies, in fact, at the root of the formation of the *Book of Zambasta* itself.¹²

The *Book of Zambasta* partakes of the many developments that occurred in the Buddhist thought-world in the course of the Middle Period of Indian Buddhism between the beginning of the Christian era and the start of the sixth century,¹³ when these developments resulted in a full-fledged Mahāyāna ideology, including practical and theoretical aspects of meditation, traditional narratives, buddhological notions, and eschatological promises. Thus chapter three, in all likelihood a Khotanese translation of a so far lost text in an Indian language,¹⁴ bridges the two worlds of Indian and Central Asian Mahāyāna.

Given the breadth of the *Book of Zambasta*, one would expect that the texts it presents were selected in order to adequately cover multiple aspects of Buddhist cultivation. In fact it includes:

- (i) doctrinal background to support certain conceptions of the Buddha as supernatural and omniscient (chaps. one, two, fifteen);
- (ii) guidance on treading the bodhisattva path without breaching its ethics (chaps. ten, eleven, twelve and sixteen);

11 However, it is the so-called *Mañjuśrīnairātmyāvatāra-sūtra*, a Late Khotanese original composition based on Old Khotanese sources preserved in a tenth-century roll from Dunhuang, that comes closer to the genre of visualisation scriptures, with its very articulated visual description of the root defilements (*rāga-*, *dveṣa-* and *moha-kleśa*) as three doctrinal monsters whose body parts are identified with aspects of Buddhist doctrine and as kings of the Rākṣasas. On this text, see Emmerick (1977 and 1997) and Maggi (2009, 357-358).

12 See Martini (2011, forthcoming and 2011, 146ff).

13 I adopt the periodization ‘Middle Period’, demarcating the formative period of both the Vinaya collections and Mahāyāna sūtras, after Schopen (1995, 476).

14 Most likely Sanskrit, which remained the prestige language throughout the history of Khotanese Buddhism, for both Mahāyāna and non-Mahāyāna texts, whereas the vernacular was exclusively used for Mahāyāna translations and original works.

- (iii) philosophical elucidation of key notions of the Mahāyāna, mostly Madhyamaka and Yogācāra (chaps. four, five, six, seven, eight and nine);
- (iv) polemics and strategies that assert the excellence of the Mahāyāna over the Śrāvakayāna and, within the Mahāyāna, of a specific conception of the *ekayāna* (chaps. thirteen and fourteen);¹⁵
- (v) narratives conveying:
 - (a) the certainty of the advent of the future Buddha Maitreya (chap. twenty-two);
 - (b) the chance of nonetheless maintaining a connection with the historical Buddha through establishing the cult of his image (chap. twenty-three);
 - (c) an urge to practice in earnest so as to ward off the decline of the Dharma (chap. twenty-four).

These interdependent materials are arranged in a concentric and partly symmetric structure, which both conceptually and compositionally holds the work together.

In view of this, one might expect that, with regard to meditation, the relevant chapters of the *Book of Zambasta* would be in some way related to each other, and that they would at the same time present a pattern of coherence with the ideological agenda of the *Book of Zambasta*. That is, one would expect:

- (i) that the choice of a number of texts devoted to meditation would aim to make available, out of the possible range of Buddhist meditative approaches, a coherent and integrated set of approaches to meditation;
- (ii) that the chapters devoted to meditation would in some way relate to each other in terms of the respective areas of practice;
- (iii) that as a ‘sub-section of a Mahāyāna Buddhist manual’, they would be intentionally interwoven with the general world-view represented by such manual.

Here I briefly present the chapters on meditation – chap. three, a visualisation on loving kindness, and chaps. seventeen to twenty-one,¹⁶ descriptions of meditations on the impure (*aśubha*)¹⁷ – in order to identify the reason for their inclusion in the *Book of Zambasta*. The

15 The *ekayāna* in the *Book of Zambasta* is briefly treated in Kunst (1977, 318-320). According to the *Da fangguang fo huayan jing gan ying chuan* 大方廣佛華嚴經感應傳, Buddhahadra 覺賢 (359-429 AD), who was met by the monk Zhi Faling 支法領 when the latter arrived in Khotan, is described as a Tripiṭaka master who was a teacher of the Dharma of the *ekayāna* (一乘法), see T 2074, 173c3-6, trans. Lamotte (1960, 68).

16 A closer inspection of their content (taking into account the description of the five realms that continues from the end of chap. seventeen to the beginning of chap. eighteen) makes it uncertain whether the two chapters should be considered as two separate texts – as assumed by Emmerick (1968) – or rather being taken as a single chapter, see Emmerick (1966) and Maggi and Martini (in preparation). For the sake of consistency, however, I follow Emmerick’s numbering of the chapters (1968).

17 Throughout the article I use Sanskrit terminology for key doctrinal notions since the Khotanese counterparts are only incompletely attested.

gist of each chapter taken individually is easy to grasp, but the possible use of these texts as a cluster of related exercises is not immediately obvious, especially as they are widely separated from each other within the collection as a whole. The chapters have different origins, ranging from a comparatively new scripture such as chapter three to the other chapters which do not display any specifically innovative, or Mahāyāna, features, and expressly address monastic practitioners.¹⁸ In order to understand the practical use of these materials, chapter three could be correlated to the others by relating its complex imagery, embedded in Mahāyāna ideology, to the counterpart-concepts that it shares with the earlier Buddhist tradition. This inheritance informs not only the ‘traditional’ chapters but also chapter three itself. The presence in the *Book of Zambasta* of meditation exercises displaying more traditional features alongside with instructions entailing a rather evolved visualisation and a degree of doctrinal novelty testifies to the coexistence of ancient and innovative practices in the religious community where the *Book* was produced and used.

Chapter three is devoted to loving kindness meditation. It is entirely conserved and thus easier to assess than the others, which are fragmentary and incomplete.¹⁹ The topics covered in chaps. seventeen to twenty-one are all meant to induce in the practitioner a sense of urgency and detachment. In chapter seventeen, the poet offers a vivid description of the mountain scenery as it passes through the four seasons, but warns that there is no pleasure in the round of birth. Chapter eighteen develops the idea of the distressful nature of the world. It describes old age and belated regret at one’s evil deeds, cites examples of evildoers, and enjoins the practitioner to avoid evil friends, to follow a spiritual mentor, and to recognize all formations as impermanent, in order to escape from the cycle of existence. Chapter nineteen – entitled “chapter on women” (*straya-parivāra*) in one of the colophons – warns against the wiles and seductions of women and cites examples of female deceivers. Chapter twenty, an obvious sequel of the “chapter on women”, is devoted to the practice of meditation on the impure, both on corpses in a cemetery and on the living body of the opposite gender (a female body in this case, since the text is addressed to male monastics), as a means of counteracting lust and entanglement with the body, and developing detachment regarding the world. The surviving portion of chapter twenty-one contains the description of a cemetery. It deals with meditation on impurity, especially with meditation on a female corpse.

In sum, chaps. seventeen to nineteen are reflections on the disadvantages of the round of birth, preparatory to the meditation on the impure presented in chaps. twenty and twenty-one,

18 The monastics are addressed as a group in chap. twenty, while chap. twenty-one addresses the practitioner in the second person singular.

19 The state of conservation is as follows – chap. seventeen: all verses preserved but fragmentarily; chap. eighteen: stanzas 18.49-60 are missing, and the rest is defective; chap. nineteen: all verses preserved, but only stanzas 19.85-94 are not defective; chap. twenty: the final stanzas, 20.73-98, are missing; chap. twenty-one: only stanzas 21.11-34 are almost completely preserved and stanzas 21.107-117 are fragmentarily preserved.

and which is best undertaken after disenchantment, dispassion, and a wish for liberation have been developed.²⁰

According to the Buddhist analysis of experience, sensual craving grows naturally when the body is seen as beautiful.²¹ As a corollary, contemplation of the impurity of the body counters the arising and escalation of sensual desire. Desire arises on the basis of wrongly perceiving objects as gratifying. Mindfulness directed to these objects, especially after the practitioner has reflected on the disadvantage, danger, and results of being caught up in sensual desire, fosters the eventual fading away of sensual craving. Thus, to take the impure as one's meditation object aims at developing the perception of the unattractiveness of something held to be attractive only on account of mis-perception. The main point of this practice is perceptual rectification.²² This is brought about mainly through sustained mental application on the aspect of impurity, by focussing on this particular facet (chaps. twenty and twenty-one), via previous discursive reflection (chaps. seventeen to nineteen), which is a precursor to this restructuring of perception and experience.

Seeing the body as *aśubha* has the potential to develop calmness and to neutralise one's identification and attachment with the ordinary bodily perception. The resulting purified mental state in turn supports the particular use of the body required in the *śubha* meditation of chapter three. In both cases, the practice aims at freeing one's perception from mis-apprehension and helps align it with reality, by developing the lowest and highest spectrum of the range of the real, namely the repulsive and the sublime. This seems to me to be the ground in which the two sets of instruction stand in mutual relation in terms of meditative dynamics, and emerges as the reason for the inclusion of these practices in the *Book of Zambasta*. Besides, there is the natural function of loving kindness as a factor balancing excessive negativity towards the body that may be the outcome of *aśubha* practice, an implication of the use of loving kindness

20 The contemplation of the corpse is attested from the early period of the history of Indian Buddhism as one of the exercises of mindfulness directed to the body. It is different from the associated practice of recollection of death (*maraṇa-smṛti*), which focuses on the inevitability of death. Meditation on decomposing corpses underwent a process of systematisation that connected with the early transmission of Buddhism to Khotan, with the result that the systematic presentations of the beginning of the fifth century, for example those of Buddhaghosa's *Visuddhimagga* and the *Śrāvakaśāstra*, are roughly contemporary to the redaction of the *Book of Zambasta*. On this practice, see Hayashima (1966), van Zeist (1966b), Boisvert (1996), Anālayo (2003, 152-155), and Dhammajoti (2009). For an example in the Gandhari corpus, see the *Saṅga-sūtra* discussed with its parallels in Glass (2007, 51ff).

21 See for example Dh 349, *subhānupassino bhīyyo taṇhā pavaḍḍhati* (this stanza has no parallels in the other *Dharmapadas* nor in the *Udānavarga*). On the use of Pāli materials in this article, see note 90.

22 That is, rectification from the four misapprehensions which are: are perversions of perception, of the mind and of views, which misunderstand what is impermanent, unsatisfactory, not-self and impure for being their opposites, see AN 4.49 at AN II 52, 3, *anicce 'niccan' ti ... adukkhe 'dukkhan' ti ... anattani 'attā' ti ... asubhe 'subhan' ti saññāvipallāso cittavipallāso dīṭṭhivipallāso*, or Vism 683 (XXII, 53).

as a general remedy to any form of aversion towards oneself and others. The development of loving kindness can balance the excessive negativity which is naturally provoked by attending to the impurity of the body. In the doctrinal schema of the eight deliverances (*aṣṭavimokṣa*), the progression from the second to the third deliverance is precisely the shift from *aśubha* to the ‘deliverance through beauty’ (*śubha-vimokṣa*) of loving kindness.²³

From this point of view, I would suggest that the paradigm of practice provided by the meditative chapters of the *Book of Zambasta* can be read in the light of the sequence of the eight deliverances (cf. also Part IV.4). Given that the *Book of Zambasta* is not structured as a meditation manual, one need not expect the two practices to be presented sequentially, according to a progression of meditation instructions, with *aśubha* preceding *śubha*. The literary principle of organisation of the subject matter of the *Book of Zambasta* is that of a Mahāyāna spiritual journey, from the attainment of the prophecy of awakening (chap. two) onwards. Therefore loving kindness, crucial with respect to the establishment of harmlessness and freedom from negativity, could not but be placed at the outset of the work. That *aśubha*, sequentially somehow a stepping stone to loving kindness in the above mentioned eight deliverances schema, is dealt with later, does not strike me as a major problem for the following reasons:

- (i) the coherence of overall doctrinal and ideological representation simply takes precedence over other principles of organisation of subject matter. Since the *Book of Zambasta* is not simply a meditation manual – it has other items on its agenda – it cannot be all-inclusive and cover a vast range of meditative instructions. Its approach is necessarily selective;
- (ii) the texts included in the *Book of Zambasta* are modules that were not necessarily used in a single sequence. Relevant chapters would be read, recited, and performed as occasion required;

23 Anālayo (2009a, 146) remarks that “once the perception of unattractiveness has been developed, the third deliverance comes into its place to counterbalance excessive disgust and negativity, by developing perception of what is beautiful, *śubha*”. For a description of the first three deliverances, see *Abhidharmakośa* 8.32, ed. Pradhan (1975, 454, 24ff), trans. de La Vallée Poussin (1925 [1980], 203ff); *Abhidharmasamuccaya* 153, ed. Pradhan (1950, 95, 4-14) or ed. Hayashima (2003, 766, 768 and 780), trans. Rahula (1971, 150-151); and also *Abhidharmasamuccaya-bhāṣya* and *Abhidharmasamuccaya-vyākhyā*, ed. Tatia (1976, 124-125), or ed. Hayashima (2003, 767, 769, and 781). In the early discourses the first three deliverances are simply described as: (i) seeing material forms while being possessed of material form, *rūpī rūpāni passati*; (ii) seeing material forms externally while being percipient of no materiality internally, *ajjhataṃ arūpasaññī bahiddhā rūpāni passati*; (iii) being resolved upon the beautiful, *subhan’ t’ eva adhimutto hoti*; see DN II 112, DN III 261-262, AN IV 306, and also Vibh 342 for an early Abhidharmic formulation. For an analysis of this scheme based on the Pāli commentaries, the **Mahāvibhāṣā-śāstra* (*Da piposha lun* 大毘婆沙論), T 1545 at T XXVII, 437c29, and the *Dazhi du lun* 大智度論, T 1509 at T XXV, 215a14, see Lamotte (1970/III, 1281-1290), and Anālayo (2009a, 142-148); for a passage on the eight deliverances in the *Samāhitā Bhūmi* of the *Yogācārabhūmi*, see ed. Delhey (2009/I, 179, 18ff); on the eight deliverances in general, see also Bronkhorst (1986, 76ff) and Hurvitz (1979).

- (iii) from a practical point of view, although a logical sequence is to radically disentangle oneself from the body (*aśubha*) prior to developing deeper concentration (*maitrī*), the two practices could be cultivated independently as well, because:
 - (a) *aśubha* itself has the potential to lead to absorption²⁴ and thus to be used as an absorption practice in its own right;
 - (b) the need to overcome specific impediments to meditation and to develop specific qualities and the implementation of the respective instructions would occur at different times. For example, if one is already ready to undertake the practice of loving kindness suffusion, he or she would not need to practice *aśubha* as a preliminary, and one particular instruction might better suit the temperament of a particular practitioner;
 - (c) in general, any aspect of mental cultivation and meditation is not limited to its ‘function’ in relation to specific practical requirements, but always continue to relate to mental cultivation in the broader sense.

In this way, the answer to the question raised at the outset of this section – whether the chapters of the *Book of Zambasta* that I have been able to classify as meditative chapters proper (along with those containing preliminary reflections) meet the requirement of being unitarily conceived in terms of practice – is positive insofar as:

- (i) they put forward a self-sufficient paradigm of meditation instructions;
- (ii) they complement each other;²⁵
- (iii) they are compatible with and functional to the spiritual journey through the Mahāyāna presented by the work they belong to.²⁶

In sum, the approach to meditation of the *Book of Zambasta* is based on two sets of autonomous though complementary practical instructions, ranging from the *brahmavihāra* of loving kindness to contemplation of the impure. These techniques complement each other and can be read in the light of the sequence of the eight deliverances. Both make ample use of the visual element. Chapter three is based on an imaginative use of the thought faculty. In the case of meditation on the impure, descriptions of one’s own body and of the experience of being in the

24 To the first level in the case of the Theravāda tradition, or up to the second level in the case of Sarvāstivāda sources, according to Hayashima (1966, 280), though see, e.g., the *Yogācārabhūmi* of *Samgharakṣa* (*Xiu xing dao di jing* 修行道地經), T 606 at T XV, 213a4, 其四禪者因不淨觀數息致之, which clearly states that all four absorptions can be reached as a result of contemplation of the impure and/or the counting of the breath, a passage noted by Greene (2006, 21).

25 With regard to point (ii), it can be emphasised that *aśubha*, far from leading to depression, despair or unhappiness, uplifts the meditator who experiences the joy and happiness of loving kindness suffusion through detachment from the body and by facilitating the necessary cooling down of the five external senses, which is required to enter the beginning or access stage of concentration.

26 This unitary trait further supports, on doctrinal as well as structural grounds, the hypothesis that the *Book of Zambasta* was not a mere compilation or anthology of texts, but that it was rather conceived from the outset as a work with its own plan and agenda.

presence of real corpses are provided as an aid to visualisation.²⁷ Thus in both cases reflection is supported primarily by the use of images, mental and external. Further, both meditation sets are based on the body. While the impure falls within the long-established practice of mindfulness directed to the body, basing loving kindness suffusion as a practice within the body is an innovation that seems to depart from the earlier (attested) meditative tradition. I would however like to mention that loving kindness practice as taught by the contemporary meditation master S.N. Goenka (b. 1924) in the tradition of the Burmese teacher U Ba Khin (1899-1971) is also based on the body's particles and on bodily 'felt sense', but because the textual roots of this particular loving kindness meditation technique, which stems from the (Burmese) Theravāda tradition, are yet to be investigated, I will not deal with it in my present investigation and only point out a few points of convergence.

II.1 The Function of Chapter Three

Loving kindness practice embraces emotional-cognitive and ethical dimensions. It is primarily aimed at bringing about the cessation of anger and ill will, thus protecting the *bodhicitta* and thereby preserving the meditator's path to Buddhahood, so much so that this is "the way in which bodhisattvas very easily, quickly realize full awakening" (Z 3.23).²⁸ This is an

27 As to the extent to which such meditation entails actual encounter with a corpse and an exercise in imagination, see Anālayo (2003, 152-153, esp. 149n with references).

28 In addition, besides being a natural antidote to aversion, and a catalyst for the realisation of not-self, loving kindness as an absorption practice can also mitigate the desire for external sensual objects of gratification, in that the happiness experienced through the practice weakens the need to search for other types of pleasure by bringing inner contentment, see Anālayo (2003, 196, 58n). Anger is considered the worst defilement able to compromise the bodhisattva path, and the idea that the faults of a bodhisattva develop for the most part from aversion rather than from affection is a commonplace in several Mahāyāna works, see, e.g., the chapter on ethics of the *Bodhisattvabhūmi*, ed. Wogihara (1930-1936, 182), or ed. Dutt (1966, 125), or ed. Hadano, including the Tibetan and Chinese versions (1993, 222-224 [= 315-316]), *yad api coktam bhagavatā yadbhūyasā bodhisattvasya dveṣasamutthitā āpattir jñātavyā na rāgasamutthiteti. tatrāyam abhiprāyo draṣṭavyaḥ: bodhisattvaḥ sattvānunayaṃ sattvapremādhipatiṃ* (ed. Hadano based on Cambridge ms. omits *sattvaprema*) *kṛtvā, yat kiṃcic ceṣṭate, sarvaṃ tad bodhisattvakṛtyam, na akṛtyam, na ca kṛtyam kurvataḥ āpattir yujyate. sattveṣu tu dviṣto bodhisattvaḥ, n' ātmano na pareṣāṃ hitam ācarati* (ed. Hadano based on Cambridge ms.: *carati*), *na ca etad bodhisattvakṛtyam* (ed. Hadano based on Cambridge ms.: *bodhisattvasya kṛtyam*), *evam akṛtyam kurvataḥ āpattir yujyate*, "In what the Lord has declared – 'Know that the transgressions (Tatz: faults) of a bodhisattva develop, for the most part, from aversion, rather than from desire-attachment' – the intention should be viewed thus: 'When the bodhisattva is ruled by love and affection for sentient beings, whatever he may do is the deed of a bodhisattva; there is nothing he can do that is not. Nor is it possible that there be any transgression (Tatz: fault) in doing what he should do. When the bodhisattva bears hatred toward sentient beings, he can do no good for himself or others, and this being what is not the duty of a bodhisattva, thus doing what he should not becomes, by extension, a transgression (Tatz: fault)'" , trans. Tatz (1986, 84). The chapter on ethics of the *Bodhisattvabhūmi* has a partial parallel in chapter

attunement of the fundamentally protective function of loving kindness (as already found in early Buddhist discourses) to the new bodhisattva path of practice. This protective function is evident for example in associating loving kindness to the idea of protecting all beings as a mother would protect (*anurakkhe*) her only child with her own life (Sn 149), or in the many lists enumerating among the benefits of *mettā* (*mettānisamsa*) protection from any outward hostility and ill-will (achieved through cultivation of non-harming mental states and intentions in oneself), and in the recitation of Pāli and vernacular texts on *mettā* as *parittas*, protective chants, in modern-day Theravāda countries. From the point of view of the bare meditation experience, in terms of both non-misapprehension and of correct perception in accordance with reality, the practice of loving kindness presented in chapter three culminates in the vision of not-self and emptiness. In terms of the Mahāyāna reading of the practice articulated by the text, the positioning of loving kindness as the third chapter, viz. almost at the beginning of the *Book of Zambasta*, is noteworthy. The chapter is preceded by an introductory discourse (chap. one) and by a paraphrase of the *Bhadramāyākāra-vyākaraṇa* (chap. two).²⁹ This text contains the story of Bhadra the magician, a disbeliever, who tries to test the Buddha's omniscience by playing magical tricks. He fails to do so, is converted, forgiven by the Buddha, and instructed by a number of bodhisattvas. He then becomes able to see the physical marks of the Buddha ("he saw in detail all his [i.e., the Buddha's] marks", Z 2.171),³⁰ abandons his disbelief, and asks the Buddha how to realise awakening. Eventually, the prophecy of awakening is bestowed on Bhadra, and he is thereby set on the bodhisattva path. The purpose of the narrative of chapter two is to prove the Buddha's omniscience and the worthiness of following the Mahāyāna path and goal. Therefore chapter three marks the practical commencement on this path, once faith and the certainty of awakening have been established according to the preceding chapter.

II.2 Content of Chapter Three

In order to explain the actual stages of the meditation, I present here a synopsis of the text, followed by an analysis of its content in the light of the Chinese parallel, the *Xiuci fen* 修慈分 of the *Buddhāvataṃsaka* 佛華嚴.³¹ Chapter three presents itself as a discourse in which twelve of the *Book of Zambasta*, see Leumann (1933-1936, 144-146) and Martini (2011, 159ff).

29 Tibetan (Peking/Ötani 760.21, Derge/Tōhoku 65) and Chinese (T 310.21 and T 324) versions of this text are known. See Régamey (1938 [1990]) for an edition, study and translation of the Tibetan, which also takes into account chapter two of the *Book of Zambasta*. A translation of the Chinese (T 310.21) is available in Chang (1983, 3-26). The Khotanese is a paraphrase with the exception of a few verses that correspond closely to the Tibetan version, see Emmerick (1968, 10-11) for the Tibetan parallels, and see Leumann (1933-1936, 361-367). See also Martini (2011) for an assessment of this discourse in the context of the circulation of *Ratnakūṭa* scriptures in Khotan.

30 The text qualifies Bhadra's attainment as *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi*, see Régamey (1990, 75, 224n).

31 The parallel has recently been located by Chang Lei 常蕾 and translated and studied by Duan Qing 段晴 (2007), who gives a Sanskrit reconstruction of the title as **Maitrī-bhāvanā-prakarāṇa*. My ignorance of modern Chinese has prevented me from benefitting from an

the Buddha, requested by the Bodhisattva Maitreya, gives a teaching on loving kindness.³² The progression of thought and meditation appears to be logical and coherent, and in fact the interpretation of the stages of the meditative sequence is not considerably affected by the discrepancies between the two versions, nor by the fact that in several instances a passage is missing in one or the other.

Synopsis

1. opening and setting of the discourse [3.1-9b]
2. qualities of the Buddha and beings [3.9c-17]
3. Maitreya's questions, and the Buddha's answers [3.18-29]
4. meditation instructions given by the Buddha [3.30-134]
- 4a. introductory instructions on posture and composure (3.30)

article by Duan Qing (2009) that came to my attention after the present article had already been submitted for publication. Previously, Pagel (1995, 74, 262n), had tentatively suggested that chapter three could be related to texts contained in the *Ratnakūṭa* collection: “In one fragment, well over twenty pages long, Maitreya appears as main protagonist alongside the Buddha (pp. 53-76 [in Emmerick (1968)]). Although not positively identified, we have of course several texts in the *Ratnakūṭa* that seem to have been inspired by the cult of Maitreya (*Rk*, 23, 40, 41 [i.e., *Maitreyamahāsimhanāda*, *Dārikāvimalaśraddhāparipṛcchā*, *Maitreyaparipṛcchādharmaṣṭā*)]”.

- 32 In the *Book of Zambasta* Maitreya features both as a bodhisattva instrumental in providing spiritual advice, in chapter three, and later as the future Buddha himself, in chapter twenty-two, a Khotanese version of the “Prophecy of Maitreya”, *Maitreyavyākaraṇa*, on which, see Leumann (1919) for Pāli, Sanskrit and Chinese parallels; Emmerick (1968, 301) for further references; and Kumamoto (forthcoming) for an overview of the position of the Khotanese vis-à-vis other recensions. On the *Maitreyavyākaraṇa* in general, see the survey in Lamotte (1958, 775-783), Lévi (1932), Jaini (1988), Ishigami (1989), Deeg (1999), Röhrborn (2004), Schmidt (1996), and Hartmann (2006d) and Karashima (2010, 464ff). Maitreya in a dual role is also found in the *Gaṇḍavyūha* (part of the *Ru fajie pin* 入法界品, **Dharmadhātupraveśanaparivarta*, T 278), where he appears both as a bodhisattva among the fifty-three spiritual mentors visited by Sudhana in the course of his spiritual journey, and as the Buddha-to-be residing in Tuṣita. A recent interpretation of Maitreya's role in the *Gaṇḍavyūha* is found in Osto (2008, 65-72), which is, however, put forward from the specific perspective adopted by the author in his study of the *Gaṇḍavyūha*, aimed at detecting the linguistic and bibliographical codes of the work in relation to the social production of meaning; on the meaning of these terms in textual theory, see Osto (2008, 3-4). Although, as highlighted by Osto, the salvific imagery of the *Gaṇḍavyūha* is indeed based on a spatialisation of time and the coexistence of multiple levels of discourse, etc., it needs to be noted that the role played by Maitreya as the future Buddha is still central and is acknowledged as such in the cosmological model accepted in the *Gaṇḍavyūha*. There the figure of Maitreya as the Buddha-to-be of the present *kalpa* is not a soteriological alternative to the timeless presence of multiple Buddha-lands, etc. Iconographically speaking, the relationship between the colossal images of Maitreya – to be related to his temporal embodiment – and the soteriology of the *Buddhāvataṃsaka* are taken up in general terms by Lokesh Chandra (1995-1997).

----- step 1 -----

- 4b. the particles in one's body (3.31-35)
- 4c. the particles of every being (3.36-37)
- 4d. the dwellings in one's particles (3.38-50)

----- step 2 -----

- 4e. beings from the ten directions in the dwellings in one's particles (3.51-52)
- 4f. beings in the five realms (3.53-61b)
- 4g. thoughts and aspirations towards beings (3.61c-66)

----- step 3 -----

- 4h. loving kindness as an antidote to wrath and anger (3.67-77)

----- step 4 -----

- 4i. the Buddhas in the ten directions in their dwellings with their retinues (3.78-97)
 - (i) the Buddhas and their retinues in the dwellings (3.78-86)
 - (ii) all forms reflected in every particle (3.87-91)
 - (iii) superiority of a single particle of the Buddha over all these particles (3.92-93b)
 - (iv) function of these particles as a means of seeing the forms of the Buddha (3.93c-d)
 - (v) the characteristic marks and attributes of the Buddha as formed from these particles (3.94-96)
 - (vi) extension of the meditative range (3.97)

----- step 5 -----

- (vii) Buddhas expounding the Dharma of loving kindness to beings (3.98-104)

----- step 6 -----

- (viii) not-self and emptiness of Buddhas and beings as meditation objects (3.105-110)

----- step 7 -----

- 4j. spatio-temporal coextensiveness (3.111-127)

----- step 8 -----

- 4k. control of the meditative manifestations (3.128-131)

----- step 9 -----

- 4l. review phase of the loving kindness suffusion (3.132-140)
 - (i) imaginary and not-self nature of beings as meditative objects (3.132-134)
 - (ii) loving kindness to cure the idea of the self and of all false beliefs (3.135-142)
 - (iii) definition of great loving kindness (3.143)
 - (iv) consequences of great loving kindness (3.144-146)
 - (v) advantages of great loving kindness (3.147-149)
5. closing of the discourse [3.150]
6. declaration of aspiration [3.151]

I will now follow the sequence by summarising or by quoting the text verbatim at particularly crucial points. I will mostly omit the lengthy and detailed descriptions of the pure landscapes which are visualised, metaphorical expressions of specific spiritual qualities (or realities), as is customary in *Buddhāvataṃsaka* literature.

The meditation sequence proper of chapter three is preceded by an introductory part (sections 1-3) that is essential to appreciate how the meditation imagery is closely connected to the specific religious environment where the discourse was redacted and used, which entails a specific notion of the goal of the Buddhist path: not mere liberation, but the attainment of Buddhahood.³³

Opening and Setting of the Discourse [Section 1]

The chapter opens with the ‘*siddham*’ formula, followed by the “thus it has been heard” clause (*ita pyūṣṭu*), and the setting of the discourse (Rājagrha, Gṛdhra-kūta Mountain). The assembly of the bodhisattvas,³⁴ headed by Maitreya “who has very pure *maitrī*” (Z 3.2ab)³⁵ is joined from each of the ten directions by ten *koṭis* of Brahmā-gods who are dwelling in the *maitrī*-state.

Respects are paid to the Buddha. Then the assembly invites Maitreya to request a discourse to the Buddha. Maitreya rises up from his seat, and addresses the “gracious, all-knowing Buddha” (Z 3.9ab).

33 I will take notice of the discrepancies between the Khotanese and its Chinese parallel (T 306 at X 959a1) only when these significantly affect the understanding of the text. Most of the discrepancies that improve the understanding of the wording and syntax of the Khotanese version are discussed by Duan Qing (2007), to whom I am indebted. In my translations of passages of T 306 I have modified her renderings. Since I am not competent in venturing into my own punctuation of classical Chinese, I quote the text of T 306 adopting the punctuation suggested by Duan Qing (2007). As to the Khotanese, my translation is indebted to Leumann’s and Emmerick’s previous interpretation of the text, Leumann (1933-1936, 31-49), and Emmerick (1968, 53-77), though I have made several modifications.

34 The Khotanese lacks the epithet *mahāsattva* (摩訶薩) qualifying Maitreya and the other bodhisattvas, as well as *mahābodhisattva* (大菩薩), and *bodhisattva-mahāsattva* (菩薩摩訶薩), which occur throughout the Chinese version.

35 The qualification of Maitreya as “the one who has very pure *maitrī*” is absent in the Chinese

The presence of huge numbers of Brahmās – rare as a specific audience in Mahāyāna sūtras – invokes the Brahmās’ abodes (*brahmavihāra*) already at the outset of the chapter, and at the same time birth as a Brahmā god through the development of the *samādhi* which is about to be described. In fact the Brahmās are also present in the closing of the discourse after the Buddha has completed the description of loving kindness and many beings have been saved: “May a myriad-thousand hundreds of Brahmā gods greatly rejoice at Maitreya’s own acceptance of all this Dharma” (Z 3.151).³⁶

Qualities of the Buddha and Beings [Section 2]

The first part of this section is centered on the qualities of the Buddha. The Bodhisattva Maitreya addresses the Buddha by listing a set of his distinctive qualities, that revolve around the relation between the Buddha and beings. The first three are introduced on the basis of the Buddha’s correct perception of all his own qualities (“since you correctly know all your dharmas ...”, Z 3.9bc):

- (i) the Buddha recognises the good deeds of every being as well as the bad ones by which the ignorant come to the world of birth (Z 3.10);
- (ii) the Buddha correctly recognises “the whole path of the three vehicles” (Z 3.11ab), namely “how the three have then become only one” (Z 3.11cd),³⁷
- (iii) the Buddha correctly perceives the faculties of every being which are “covered with defilements” (Z 3.12c) but have “the awakening-seed in [their] middle” (Z 3.12cd).³⁸

parallel, which instead has 彌勒菩薩摩訶薩, “Maitreya *bodhisattva-mahāsattva*” (T 306, 959a13). However the explanation of Maitreya’s name is found in another place of the Chinese parallel, in a passage which is missing in the Khotanese version, and positioned just before the parallel to Z 3.147: 佛子，一切菩薩，皆應如是修習慈心，汝以修慈，名為慈者 (T 306, 961a12), “Son of the Buddha, all bodhisattvas should thus cultivate loving kindness. Because you cultivate loving kindness, you are called the Benevolent One (*Maitreya*)”. The Khotanese form for the name of Maitreya is *Mitraa-* (spelled *māt(t)raa-*, *mit(t)raa-*, *mait(t)raa-*). Variant forms are attested for *maitrī*: *maitrā-*, *meitrā-*, *mātrā-*. For a linguistic analysis of these forms, see Maue (forthcoming).

36 See T 306, 961a24: 佛說此經已，彌勒菩薩摩訶薩，及十方國土，諸來梵眾，皆大歡喜，信受奉行, “When the Buddha had preached this discourse, Maitreya *bodhisattva-mahāsattva* and the Brahmā-gods from the [Buddha-]lands of the ten directions all greatly rejoiced. They received it with faith and reverently practised it” (with no parallel for Z 3.151b-d, *spāte gyastūñā bādāndi parrāta satva pharu*, “Heavenly flowers rained down. Many beings were saved”). The relationship between birth as Brahmā and loving kindness is the doctrinal background that explains the presence of Brahmās among the audience of the discourse.

37 See T 306, 959a25: 善能開悟三乘之道，及以三乘，同歸一乘, “You have skilfully awoken to the path of the three vehicles as well as to [the fact that] the three vehicles are subsumed under the One Vehicle”.

38 According to the Chinese, it is the Tathāgata-seed (有如來種, **tathāgatabīja* or **tathāgatagotra*)

Three further qualities of the Buddha are introduced on the basis of the Buddha’s vision of all dharmas as empty, unsubstantial and self-less (“like a dream, a mirage, magic, you have seen all dharmas as empty, essence-less, self-less”, Z 3.13), and on the basis of the ever-lasting benefit of his compassion (“it is the benefit of [your] compassion which has no end in you at all”, Z 3.14ab):

- (iv) through the skilful means of the non-extinction of the Buddha’s compassion the ignorant can see the Buddha’s form (Z 3.14cd);³⁹
- (v) the Buddha is completely created by wisdom (Z 3.15ab);⁴⁰

that is covered with defilements: 根性差別，及於煩惱纏蓋之中，有如來種，“The faculties and nature of all beings are different, but within [their] defilements, afflictions and hindrances, there is the Tathāgata-seed” (T 306, 959a26-27), rather than the faculties (*indriya*) of beings as in the Khotanese.

39 In my translation of Z 3.14 I follow Duan Qing (2007, 42), which corrects previous interpretations, Leumann (1933-1936, 30), Bailey (1967, 351) and Emmerick (1968, 55), on the basis of the Chinese parallel at T 306, 959a29: 而大悲無盡，以善方便，令諸凡夫見佛色身微妙之相，“However, so endless is [your] great compassion that with skilful means you make the worldlings see the excellent marks of the body of the Buddha”. Here it is also worth noticing that the Chinese has “great compassion”, 大悲, whereas the Khotanese has only “compassion”, *mulśde*; see discussion in section on “Textual Relationship Between Chapter Three and T 306”.

40 The interpretation of Z 3.15ab (*bvāmata balysa kyau padamdātā biśu*) as “It is [your] wisdom, Buddha, which has fashioned you wholly”, in Duan Qing (2007, 42), previously rendered by Emmerick (1968, 53) as “It is your wisdom, Buddha, that has fashioned everything”, is suggested by the parallel passage at T 306, 959b1: 佛身者，般若波羅蜜之所成就，“The body of the Buddha is accomplished through the *Prajñāpāramitā*”. For the cliché of the Buddha being “born of wisdom”, see *Bhadramāyākāra-vyākaraṇa* 18, ed. Régamey (1990, 28), “I am created by the magic of wisdom (*jñānamāyā*)”, *bzang po nga yang 'di lta ste ye shes kyi sgyu mas sprul pa yin no*, which in this case is, however, found in the context of a docetic view of the Buddha. The occurrence of the *Prajñāpāramitā* as the agent responsible for the accomplishment of the body of the Buddha in T 306 recalls the miracle of the creation of a cosmic setting for the teaching of the *Prajñāpāramitā* performed by the Buddha at the outset of the *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā* in order to teach the sūtra and the *Prajñāpāramitā* itself. On the marks of the Buddha see, e.g., the *Pradaśiṇa-sūtra*, ms. Ch 0048.45-46: *dvāradīrsa lakṣaṇa brūna anuvyanjana haṣṭā bida rūpakāya tcarṣau ttrāma sa khū gara ysarni phyasṭa*, “a physical form (*rūpakāya*) possessing the thirty-two characteristic marks, the eighty splendid attributes, brilliant, shining like a golden mountain” – which makes the body of the Dharma visible and thereby ‘accessible’. A quotation from the *Anantamukhanirhāradhāraṇī-sūtra* in the Late Khotanese *Book of Vimalakīrti* 58, ed. Maggi (2003, 91-92), presents the marks of the Buddha specifically as “entries into the Dharma” (*dharmamukha*), in that the body of form (*rūpakāya*) offers access to the body of Dharma (*dharmakāya*): *la-akṣara lakṣaṇa bvāya nai ttyau hīvyā<ña>ñe ba 'ysa /vara dharmakāya akhaus<ḥ>a agunai lakṣana nūaiya*, “The syllable *la* [means] the characteristic marks (*lakṣaṇa*) and the rays [of the halo (*prabhā*) of the Buddhas. However, one] should not appropriate the Buddha by means of them. The body of the Dharma (*dharmakāya*) [is] motionless there, markless according to [its] mark”; for the Tibetan parallel, see Inagaki (1987, 199-200). The marks of the Buddhas and their relationship to the variegated phenomena of the Buddhafields, and a graded hierarchy of merit existing among different characteristics and attributes of the body of the Buddhas are central respectively to the *Anantabuddhakṣetragūṇodbhāvana-sūtra* and the

(vi) in reality the Buddha is like the sky (Z 3.15cd).⁴¹

From a literary point of view, it is remarkable that all of the above qualities are referred to the Buddha by addressing him with direct speech, using the vocative and second person (*balysa* “o Buddha”, *uhu* “you”, etc.).

The second part of the section moves on to the qualities of beings. In this context by ‘beings’ are intended those spiritually advanced beings who have received and put into practice the Buddhist teachings.⁴² Maitreya extols their merits (Z 3.16-17):

- (i) the senses (*uvā*) of such beings do not seek formations unlike the foolish deer on the plain who desire water (Z 3.16);
- (ii) beings have seen the Buddha (“they have seen you”, Z 3.17a) and “they thus behold everything” (Z 3.17bc);⁴³
- (iii) they thereby continuously hear only the Dharma of the Buddha (Z 3.17cd).

Maitreya Questions the Buddha Regarding Three Points and the Buddha's Answers [Section 3]

In this section first the Bodhisattva Maitreya questions the Buddha regarding three points:⁴⁴

- (i) “How is full awakening easily obtained?” (Z 3.18cd);

**Dharmaśāṅkha-sūtra/Mañjuśrīpariṣcchā-sūtra*, two *Buddhāvataṃsaka* sūtras now available in Sanskrit in a unique collection of twenty sūtras in a manuscript from the Potala, ed. and trans. with their parallels by Vinītā Tseng (2010/1.2, 557-593 and 703-769). For the Chinese and Tibetan translations, see T 289, T 290, T 278.26, T 279.31 and Peking/Ōtani 772, Derge/Tōhoku 104; and T 473, T 661, T 662 and Peking/Ōtani 83, Derge/Tōhoku 444. On this collection of sūtras, see also note 75 and 80. Further, on the visualisation of the thirty-two marks in another meditation text, T 643, see Yamabe (1999b, 216-262).

- 41 In the place of the qualities (vi) found at stanza 3.15cd, T 306, 959b1-2 has: 自然真實，常住不變，猶如虛空，“self-existing, true, constant, immutable, like the empty sky”, which appear to be attributes of the body of the Buddha as fashioned by the *Prajñāpāramitā*, mentioned before (佛身者，般若波羅蜜之所成就), rather than just referring to the Buddha.
- 42 This is more explicit in the parallel to Z 3.16, at T 306, 959b2-3: 若有衆生，勤修福慧，“When a sentient being perseveringly practises merits and wisdom, [he] ...”, and in the passage parallel to Z 3.17, at T 306, 959b4, which has, in addition to the Khotanese: 如是之人... 亦能依教，如理修行，“Such a being ... will also observe the instruction and practise accordingly”.
- 43 This clause is absent in T 306, 959b4-5, which, in the place of qualities (ii) and (iii) found at stanza 17 of the Khotanese, has 如是之人，則得見佛，恒聞說法，亦能依教，如理修行，“Such a being will then see the Buddha and constantly listen to [the Buddha] teaching the Dharma. He will also observe the instruction and practise accordingly”.
- 44 In the Khotanese version the questions are asked directly to the Buddha without premising his epithets (“I ask the Buddha – give me my opportunity – how is ...”, Z 3.18), whereas T 306, 959b5-8 is more detailed and the Buddha is addressed with his epithets: 世尊，我今欲於如來應正等覺，少有所問，唯願慈哀，為我宣說。世尊，菩薩云何於阿耨多羅三藐三菩提，少用功力，安樂無倦，而能速證廣大佛法，“World-Honoured One (*Bhagavat*), now I would like to ask you, the Tathāgata, Arhat, Samyaksambuddha, about a small matter. Out of

- (ii) “How are all the great, noble qualities of a Buddha quickly, easily obtained?” (Z 3.19);
- (iii) “Where does one not see the many sufferings in the round of birth [but instead] the qualities of a Buddha are swiftly fulfilled?” (Z 3.20).

Then, the Buddha acknowledges the suitability of the questions and replies to Maitreya’s three points with a synthetic answer to each (Z 3.21-29):⁴⁵

The first answer is especially important in that it is addressed to Maitreya as a bodhisattva and implicitly points toward his “acceptance of all this Dharma” (*nātu ttū hamatā dātu biśśu*, Z 3.151) and thereby his own attainment of Buddhahood by specifically relying on the practice of loving kindness. In the overall structure of the *Book of Zambasta*, the advent of Maitreya as a Buddha is presented in chapter twenty-two, the *Maitreyavyākaraṇa*,⁴⁶ thus material on Maitreya is placed in a symmetric position, respectively the third and third from last chapters of the work, while the intervening chapters cover various aspects of the bodhisattva path in terms of training of body, speech and mind.

Meditation Sequence [Section 4]

It is only at this point that the meditation instructions given by the Buddha begin. They will encompass, in the course of the exposition, the three points synthetically covered in the answers given to the Bodhisattva Maitreya (Z 3.23-39). After the introductory instructions (section 4a) on posture and composure (“sitting down properly, calmly in a very tranquil place, one should collect

mercy, may you expound it to me. World-Honoured One, how can a bodhisattva, [aspiring for] unsurpassed full awakening, exerting little effort, easily and without weariness, quickly realise the wide and great Buddhadharmā?”. The Chinese has 於阿耨多羅三藐三菩提, the equivalent of *anuttarasamyaksambodhi*, unsurpassed full awakening, corresponding to the Khotanese equivalent of *bodhi*, *balysūstā*.

45 The Buddha replies to Maitreya highlighting his quality of benefitting beings through his loving kindness: “There is always an opportunity for you, Maitreya, when you ask us something. Suitably you have now asked us about a good subject. You have brought great happiness for beings” (Z 3.21-22). T 306, 959b11-14 is even more specific: 善哉! 彌勒, 汝於我所, 常有所問, 今所問義, 最順我心。汝今哀愍諸天及人一切世間, 無量衆生, 多所利益, 多所安樂, 故能問我如是之義, “Good, Maitreya, you always have questions when you [come] to me. What you have asked today greatly suits my mind. Today, out of compassion in all worlds of gods and humans, to [bring] great benefit and happiness to endless sentient beings, for this reason you are able to ask me about such a matter”. The other chief quality of Maitreya, connected to his aspiration to leadership, is reflected by the presence of a large following (“beginning with Maitreya many thousands of bodhisattvas were there”, at Z 3.2), and 與無量大菩薩衆俱, 彌勒菩薩摩訶薩, 而為上首, “[the Buddha] was staying together with innumerable *mahābodhisattvas* [of whom] Maitreya *bodhisattva-mahāsattva* was the foremost”, at T 306, 959a13-14. For the origin of these two qualities of Maitreya in the early discourses, see Anālayo (2010, 95ff).

46 On the *Maitreyavyākaraṇa* see note 32.

one's senses very calmly", Z 3.30)⁴⁷ a meditation taking as its starting point the contemplation of the particles in one's body, begins.

The Particles in One's Body (Section 4b)

- "With calm senses, one should contemplate one's own body." (Z 3.31ac)
- "These limbs of mine are all made of particles." (Z 3.31d)
- "Earth, water, wind [and] fire have come together." (Z 3.32ab)⁴⁸
- "In every part of me, space is in the midst of them [i.e., the particles]." (Z 3.32cd)
- "This [internal] space is the same as [space] outside: it allow plenty of endless room for everyone." (Z 3.33)⁴⁹
- "One should think of one's particles as utterly pure." (Z 3.34ac)
- "They are like beryl stones outside and pure gold within. They are very excellent, soft and fragrant." (Z 3.34cd)

The Particles of Every Being (Section 4c)

- "In every being the particles are utterly pure, faultless – [pure] in this way are only beryl stones." (Z 3.36)
- "They shine just like pure, refined gold. They smell divinely. They are very soft to the touch." (Z 3.37)

47 See T 306, 959b22-23: 佛子，若諸菩薩，修習慈心，應在空閒寂靜之處，"Son of the Buddha, if a bodhisattva cultivates loving kindness, he should stay in an empty and quiet place".

48 T 306, 959b23-25 broadly agrees with the Khotanese (Z 3.30-32b): 觀察其身上下支節，皆微塵聚，地水火風和合所成，"He contemplates the limbs of his body below and above as being all [just] clusters of particles, [i.e.] the result of a combination of earth, water, fire, and wind". However, the parallel passage to Z 3.130-131 (step 8: control of the meditative manifestations), at T 306, 960c22-24, explicitly refers to analysing the categories of the four elements, with no counterpart in Khotanese: 譬如比丘，入遍處定，於一切物皆作地解水火風解。以如是解，攝持其心。修慈之人，亦復如是。以慈勝解，莊嚴攝持，"Just as if a monk who enters a meditative sphere through a *krtsnāyatana*, understands that all is made of earth ... water ... fire ... he understands [that all is made of] wind. By understanding in this way, he comprehends and holds it in mind. It is the same with a person who cultivates loving kindness. Because he is determined on loving kindness, he adorns himself with it, comprehends and holds it [in mind]". This is a crucial passage from the point of view of the theory and practice of meditation of chapter three, on which I come back below, see the section on "Four Elements Meditation as the Basis for Loving Kindness Suffusion".

49 Previous translations of the Khotanese passage have been reinterpreted by Duan Qing (2007, 42) in the light of the Chinese parallel. The first part of the instruction is slightly more detailed at T 306, 959b25-26: 復應思惟，即彼一一微塵之內，皆有虛空；是諸虛空，莫不悉以容受為相，"Then he should think: 'Inside of each of those atoms there is empty space. There is none which does not have capacity as its characteristic'".

The Dwellings in One's Particles (Section 4d)

- “In the space afforded by them [i.e., in the inter-particle space], there I have dwellings of beryl.” (Z 3.39ab).
- A very detailed and ornate description of the interior of the pure dwellings follows (e.g., “all the particles are so pure there, all just like pure, divine beryl”, Z 3.47, etc.)⁵⁰

Countless Beings From the Ten Directions as Having Entered One's Dwellings (Section 4e)

“[51] Then one should think thus: ‘However endlessly many beings there are in the eastern direction, they have all entered these dwellings. [52] So up to all ten directions: all the beings have entered these dwellings of mine.’” (Z 3.51-52)⁵¹

Beings in the Five Realms (Section 4f)⁵²

They all shine with equal appearance, experience pure tangibles and smells, are free from sufferings and enjoy manifold heavenly pleasures, as many as there are sufferings in the round of birth, putting on various beautiful garments that are hanging freely available on trees, etc. (Z 3.53-61b)

Thoughts and Aspirations Towards Beings (Section 4g)

- “One should think of them all as happy, contented, laughing.” (Z 3.61cd)
- “One should think of them all as contented, healthy, very youthful.” (Z 3.62ab)
- “They do not die at all. They are not born again at all.” (Z 3.62cd)
- “May anger disappear for them, all ignorance, evil passion.” (Z 3.63ab)
- “May they all be contented with awakening.” (Z 3.63cd)
- “They are all noble-born. They are servants of no one.” (Z 3.64ab)

50 Besides minor differences, the most noteworthy discrepancy in this passage is the specification, in the Chinese, that the dwellings imagined in each of one's atoms are a Buddha-land, 佛國 (**buddhakṣetra*), within each atom of one's body: 若諸菩薩，於自他身一切衆生，作於如是決定解已，復應想念自身微塵，一一塵中，皆有佛國， “After the bodhisattva has certainly understood this of himself and all other beings, he should then think: ‘In every single particle among the particles of one's body, there is a Buddha-land’” (T 306, 959c1-3). The Buddha-lands also occur later in the Chinese: “thus are all the Buddha-lands (如是一切諸佛國土) ...”, at T 306, 959c15 without counterpart in the Khotanese stanza (Z 3.46), and at T 306, 959c20-22, see below note 51.

51 The parallel to Z 3.51, T 306, 959c20-22, qualifies the dwellings as Buddha-lands, 一切世界，所有衆生，皆來入我諸佛國土宮殿之中， “whatever beings there are from all the worlds, they all entered the palaces of the Buddha-lands within me”.

52 On the five realms clause see the discussion in the section of “Textual Relationship Between Chapter Three and T 306”.

- “The faculties of all beings are heavenly, excellent.” (Z 3.64cd)
- “With all their pleasures, all with all their goodness, all [these] are all such as just one being.” (Z 3.65)⁵³

The point that all beings are “as just one being” is the premise for the development of the subsequent reflections on loving kindness as an antidote to mental obstructions caused by wrath and hatred in the next section:

Loving Kindness as an Antidote to Wrath and Anger (Section 4h)

“[66] If it should occur to one: ‘There is inequality (*gguhamamṅgatātā*) there. This one is not dear to me. My senses (*uvā*) are not able to reach him’, [67] one should think thus: ‘This is surely [due] to my heavy works (*karma māsta mama*), if he intends to make an obstacle for me. [68] If my mind (*ayasmū*) does not now become pure towards him, my anger should be displayed to all.⁵⁴ [69] There is no being who has not yet made me angry, because all have come previously here in the round of birth.⁵⁵ [70] If I should be angry with this one, [then] I am angry with [them] all. Moreover, all have been beloved to me [in the past, and all have been beloved] to one another. [71] Just in the same way as I have completely given up that anger with all, so I completely give up anger [and] wrath towards this one. [72] If I do not give up anger [and] wrath towards this one, through wrath all beings will go to hell.

[73] This is its consequence: because I too will go to hell, therefore I must give up hostility, wrath in the mind.

[74] The Buddhas, too, in the ten directions, will be watching me [and thinking thus:] ‘Only a fool intends to seek awakening through anger. [75] That being full of wrath does not escape from sufferings himself, how could he then aspire like this: ‘If only I could rescue another!’?’ [76] Through wrath, in the round of birth a man becomes [like] a serpent. Through hatred, moreover, poison arises in the serpent.

53 T 306, 960a7 adds another quality of beings: 悉能摧滅姪怒愚癡，當證菩提，究竟安樂，“They have been able to destroy all desire, and anger, and ignorance. They will attain awakening and the utmost bliss”.

54 T 306, 960a8-13 is more detailed than Z 3.66-68: 是修慈者，若在如是衆生之中，見一衆生於已有違，心緣於此，不生愛念，則應以智慧深自觀察：我往世中，定於此人作重業障。以是因故，還於今日障我菩提。我若於此人不生歡喜，則於餘一切衆生之處皆亦不應而作饒益，“If one who cultivates loving kindness stays among beings like this and sees that a being has deviated, and due to this does not arouse a thought of affection in one’s mind, then one should with his wisdom look into oneself deeply: ‘In the past I must certainly have created a heavy karmic obstruction to this being. This is the reason why he still now obstructs my awakening. If I do not feel joy towards him, then in regard to the remaining beings herein I cannot properly be of benefit’.

55 See T 306, 960a13-14: 以無始時來在生死中，無一衆生非於過去曾害我者，“Since beginningless time, in the round of birth, there has not been a single being who has not harmed me in the past”.

[77] I should meditate on *maitrī* without wrath [and] without hatred. [My] thought towards beings should be wholesome, with impartiality.” (Z 3.66-77)

The Buddhas in the Ten Directions in Their Dwellings (Section 4i)⁵⁶

(i) The Buddhas and their retinues in the dwellings (Z 3.78-86)

“[78] So that to wholly give up hatred [and] wrath, he should then think thus about all the *deva*-Buddhas in the ten directions [79] with their Śrāvakas, with all the bodhisattvas: ‘In these dwellings they all sit ... ’”⁵⁷

(ii) All forms reflected in every particle (Z 3.87-91)

“[87] All the particles there ... [89] ... are soft to the touch just like divine sky, such in colour as refined *kāñcana*-gold, [90] pure in nature. So [pure] is only beryl. In every particle all forms are reflected ... ”

(iii) Superiority of a single particle of the Buddha over all these particles (Z 3.92-93b)

(iv) Function of these particles as a means to see the forms of the Buddha (Z 3.93c-d)

“[92] Then, one should think thus: ‘However these things shine, a single particle of the Buddha excels [lit. ‘has excelled’] them all, [93] in appearance, purity, in perfume, touch, everything. Yet through these particles the form of the Buddha has been seen.”

(v) The characteristic marks and attributes of the Buddha as formed from these particles (Z 3.94-96)

“[94] One should think of the characteristic marks and secondary attributes of a Buddha as [formed] from such particles. [95] They are all greater in size than every being.⁵⁸ Thus again one should think of a second [Buddha], a third [Buddha], all Buddhas.⁵⁹ [96] One should think of them as greatly happy with the best happy states. They are all rejoicing in the qualities of the Buddhas.”⁶⁰

56 The sequence in this section presents major discrepancies between the Khotanese and the Chinese. The sequence of T 306 roughly corresponds to the following stanzas: Z 3.78-79, 3.95a-b, 3.94, 3.82, 3.80-81, 3.83, 3.98-99, 3.84-85, 3.86, 3.96cd. In T 306, stanzas Z 3.87a-c, 3.88c-d, 3.89a-b, 3.91, 3.90, 3.92, 3.93a-b are found after section 4.vii on visualisation of Buddhas expounding the Dharma of loving kindness to beings.

57 T 306, 960a27-28 specifies that the Buddhas of the ten directions with their retinues have entered “the palaces of my Buddha-lands”, 入我諸佛國土宮殿之中, whereas the Khotanese has “in these dwellings” (*ttāto bisvo*, Z 3.79).

58 T 306, 960a28-29 specifies that the body of the Tathāgatas is twice as tall as that of a man: 是諸如來身量大小過人一倍, see Z 95ab: *māstara śsumbāku panāna satvāna bisśā*.

59 The Chinese has no parallel for Z 3.95cd: *ta vātcu sātā balysi ta dādā kā’ñi bisśā*.

60 Z 3.15: “It is the favour of [your] compassion which has no end in you at all. It is this skilful expedient of yours which the ignorant see as your physical body”.

(vi) Extension of the meditative range (Z 3.97)

“[97] One should think thus of all the bodhisattvas, arhats: “May all beings surely become just such.”⁶¹

(vii) The Buddhas expounding the Dharma of loving kindness to beings (Z 3.98-104)

“[98] A gentle, fragrant, pleasant breeze came. Umbrellas, banners, necklaces all flutter about. [99] From it various, numerous songs of praises [could be heard, praising] all the virtues of Buddhas [and] of beings. [100] All beings are assembled before the Buddhas. The Buddhas, sitting, expound the Dharma to them. [101] The voice of the Buddhas is pure [and] very soft. All beings are to be made happy by fortune [102] as if one bathed someone with nectar alone. Fortune is upon them, very great contentment. [103] All the defilements of beings are completely calmed for them. Their minds are calmed. [104] They sit in rapture and happiness (*prīti-sukha*). The Buddhas, sitting, expound the pure Dharma (*dātu vasutu*), [that is] a description of loving kindness as it is, to be meditated upon by me (*maitre padamgyo crrāma bhāvāṅṅa mamā*).”

(viii) Not-self and emptiness of Buddhas and beings as meditation objects (Z 3.105-110)

“[105] Beings are in nature all like a dream, partial blindness, a mirage. No self can be found. [106] So Buddhas are self-less. Only to fools the self appears to exist. Therefore they do not escape completely. [107] Fools create many formations by their own senses. Through their own senses, fools are themselves bound there. [108] As long as they do not understand: ‘Further, the mind [and] thoughts are false’, then, like a dream, things appear to them. [109] Then one should think thus: ‘That these things are all empty. I have meditated on loving kindness [only a] little as far as the mind is concerned. [110] The empty, as empty, cannot cause obstruction. Self-less are beings, without self all Buddhas’.”⁶²

Spatio-temporal Coextensiveness (Section 4j)

61 Z 3.97 has no parallel in T 306. The presence of the arhats side by side with the bodhisattvas in the wish that they may obtain the Buddha’s physical form described in the stanzas above implies the wish that the followers of other vehicles may also attain Buddhahood.

62 Emmerick (1968, 71) translates Z 3.109cd, *mulysgo aysmūna maitro kāsṭaimā aysu*, as “Little I have meditated upon love with my mind”. I take *aysmūna* as an instrumental of respect rather than of means, most likely rendering a Sanskrit *maitricittēṇa*. I would interpret the Chinese parallel, 我今慈心，猶為狹小 at T 306, 960b28-29 as “my present mind of loving kindness (*maitrī-citta*) is still restricted”, rather than “Since I have meditated upon loving kindness, I am especially small” with Duan Qing (2007, 54), as the sense would seem that the loving kindness mind has not yet grown great in the meditation. On this aspect of the meditation, see note 115.

“[111] I have the fields of the three times (Skt. *tryadhva-kṣetra*) in every single particle of me. The beings of the three times are all in every single field of mine. [112] The manifestations of the three times are in each of these particles of mine. All the *kalpas* of the three times have entered every moment. [113] The Buddhas of the three times sit there in each place. They appear before every being in every moment. [114] Some, sitting, meditate; some expound the pure, best Dharma; some accept my nectar. [115] The arhats [and] the bodhisattvas of the three times all sit in a circle around every omniscient Buddha. [116] They all sit happy with the happiness of the three times. They appear to me happy with the happiness of the three times. [117] Their fields are infinitely varied, purified, pure. Every single particle has shone brighter than the former dwellings. [118] Wherever there is space, there smells smell, [and are] pure, very soft, [119] [and] the forms of the three times (Skt. *tryadhva-rūpa*) shine. In every moment, with these I pay many honours to those Buddhas. [120] So do I pay many honours to the bodhisattvas, so to beings, so to the *śrāvakas* ...” (Z 3.111-120)

Control of the Meditative Manifestation (Section 4k)

See discussion below.

Review Phase of the Loving Kindness Suffusion (Section 4l)

See discussion below.

Closing of the Discourse [Section 5]

“[150] The Buddha completed the exposition of loving kindness. Heavenly flowers rained down. Many beings were saved.”

Declaration of Aspiration [Section 6]

“[151] May a myriad thousand hundreds of Brahmā gods greatly rejoice at Maitreya’s own acceptance of all this Dharma.”

III. Chapter Three, T 306, and the *Buddhāvataṃsaka* in Khotan

In order to better position the Khotanese discourse within the *Buddhāvataṃsaka* tradition that was received and possibly partly formed in Khotan, before considering the textual relationship between the third chapter of the *Book of Zambasta* and the *Xiuci fen* 修慈分 (T 306) in the

light of the above comparative reading, I will briefly survey the evidence for the circulation of *Buddhāvataṃsaka* scriptures in Khotan.

The discourse presented in chapter three is requested by the Bodhisattva Maitreya, who plays a prominent place in another *Buddhāvataṃsaka* text, the *Gaṇḍavyūha* (part of the *Ru fajie pin* 入法界品, **Dharmadhātupraveśanaparivarta*, T 278),⁶³ where he appears both as a bodhisattva among the fifty-three spiritual mentors (*kalyāṇamitra*) visited by Sudhana in the course of his spiritual journey, and also as the Buddha-to-be residing in Tuṣita.⁶⁴ As in the *Gaṇḍavyūha*, in the *Book of Zambasta* Maitreya also features as a bodhisattva questioning the Buddha in chapter three and later as the future Buddha himself in chapter twenty-two, a Khotanese version of the “Prophecy of Maitreya” (*Maitreyavyākaraṇa*), in which the historical Buddha Śākyamuni announces that he is about to depart and entrusts his teaching to the sixteen great arhats, after which he describes the world at the time of the future Buddha Maitreya. However, too much significance cannot be attached to such parallelism between the structure of the *Gaṇḍavyūha* and that of the *Book of Zambasta*, since Maitreya appears in many other works and is a regular presence in many Mahāyāna discourses.

In order to contextualize the Khotanese version within the *Buddhāvataṃsaka* tradition received (and possibly partly formed) in Khotan, I need to briefly review the evidence for the circulation of *Buddhāvataṃsaka* scriptures in the Silk Road kingdom. Historical data suggests that Khotan was a source of *Buddhāvataṃsaka* works from at least the first decades of the fifth century. The first complete translation of the *Buddhāvataṃsaka* (T 278) was based on a

63 No Sanskrit version of the *Gaṇḍavyūha* under the title *Dharmadhātupraveśana* has survived, since the only “*Buddhāvataṃsaka*” texts existing in Sanskrit are the *Daśabhūmika-sūtra* and the *Gaṇḍavyūha*, which were probably incorporated in the *Buddhāvataṃsaka* corpus as this grew over time. The title *Dharmadhātupraveśana* may have been used in some versions of the sūtra circulating in Central Asia either independently or as a part of a *Buddhāvataṃsaka* collection which was brought to China before the first complete translation of the *Buddhāvataṃsaka* by Buddhahadra (佛馱跋陀). The full title of the *Buddhāvataṃsaka* in forty fascicles, *Ru busiyi jietuo jingjie puxian xingyuan pin* 入不思議解脫境界普賢行願品 (**Acintyavimokṣagocarapraveśana-Samantabhadracaryā-praṇidhāna*, “The Vow of the conduct of Samantabhadra, entering into the pasture of inconceivable liberation”, T 293) under which the sūtra seemingly circulated in South India from where it was brought to China at the end of the eighth century, is discussed in Läänemets (2006, 339, 9n); on the title of the Sanskrit *Gaṇḍavyūha*, see Osto (2009). On the Sanskrit and Chinese versions of the *Gaṇḍavyūha*, see Gómez (1967, xviii-xxxii), Hirakawa (1993, 279-282), and Osto (2009, 4-7), to which the Sanskrit fragments in the Turfan Fund identified by Hori (2002), preserved in a manuscript earlier than the earliest extant Nepalese manuscript (ms. Hodgson 2), need to be added. No Tibetan version appears to have been produced either individually or as part of the *Buddhāvataṃsaka* collection which was translated in the first half of the ninth century (*Sangs rgyas phal po che zhes bya ba shin tu rgyas pa chen po'i mdo*, Peking/Ötani 761, Derge/Tōhoku 44). According to Steinkellner (1995, 19) it is very unlikely that an earlier Tibetan translation of the *Gaṇḍavyūha* existed prior to the codification and great revision of Buddhist scriptures that occurred under Khri lde srong btsan (r. ca.800-815 AD) and Khri gtsug lde btsan (r. 815-836 AD).

64 On Maitreya’s role in the *Gaṇḍavyūha*, see note 33.

manuscript acquired in Khotan,⁶⁵ and the second translation (T 729) was undertaken by the Khotanese monk Śīkṣānanda 實叉難陀 (652-710 AD) at the very end of the seventh century. Still another Khotanese monk, Gītāmitra, brought to China and translated the *Daśabhūmika-sūtra*, the oldest part of the *Buddhāvataṃsaka*, in 376 AD, under the dynasty of the Eastern Jin 東晉 (317–420 AD).⁶⁶

In terms of art-historical evidence, Angela F. Howard (1986) has demonstrated the Khotanese origin of the *Buddhāvataṃsaka* imagery of the cosmological Buddha.⁶⁷ As to the relation between the circulation of *Buddhāvataṃsaka* scriptures in Khotan in the period roughly corresponding to that covered by the Six Dynasties 六朝 period (220-589 AD) and the spreading of *Huayan jing* 華嚴經 preaching, cult and recitations in China, it has however to be emphasised that the textual (mid-fifth century onwards) and iconographic (eight century) evidence available is not sufficient to point to the existence of an institutionally organised *Buddhāvataṃsaka* cult in Khotan related to the recitation of texts.

The evidence provided by a Khotanese text such as chapter three of the *Book of Zambasta* is significant in terms of the role played by Khotan in the history of the textual transmission of the Mahāyāna. In the light of the general socio-linguistic dynamics operating in early Khotanese Buddhism, it is unlikely that this text was originally ‘composed’ or ‘redacted’ in Khotanese. Instead, it is quite probable that a written (or far less likely, oral) text in an Indian language preceded the Khotanese recension. Such antecedent may well have been ‘Indian’ as far as the language and point of origin of the transmission of its contents are concerned, while

65 This translation was completed by the Indian monk Buddhahadra (佛馱跋陀) by 420 AD. According to his biography in the *Gaoseng zhuan* 高僧傳 by Huijiao 慧皎 (497-554 AD), dated 519 AD, the monk Zhi Faling 支法領 acquired in Khotan the first part of the *Buddhāvataṃsaka*, in thirty-six thousand verses, which had not been translated before; then in 418 the Governor of the Wu Commandery and the General of the Guard of the Right asked Buddhahadra to translate it, see T 2059, at T L, 335c, 3-9. The *Chu sanzang ji ji* 出三藏記集 (T 2145) completed by Sengyou 僧祐 in the Liang Dynasty 梁朝 (502-557 AD), confirms this account and supplies the date of the completion of the translation, 420 AD (T 2145 at T LV, 61a, 6-7). See also Lamotte (1960, 61ff), Zürcher (1972/I, 62) and (1972/II, 407-408, 71n).

66 See Kumamoto (1999, 348).

67 The most comprehensive imagery painted on the body of a deity and inspired by the *Buddhāvataṃsaka* is the fresco from Balawaste, a site near Domoko (Khotan) dated by Williams (1973) to the eight century, discussed by Howard (1986, 101-102). There is a long tradition of Japanese scholarship concerned with tracing the historical background of Central-Asian and Chinese *Buddhāvataṃsaka* iconographies. In particular, Matsumoto Eichii 松本栄一 traced the diffusion of this imagery from Khotan to Kucha and maintained the dependence of Kucha’s iconographies on the Khotanese, followed by Mizuno Seichii 水野清一 and Yoshimura Rei 吉村怜. For a review of the Japanese scholarship, see Howard (1986, 95-110). Howard has doubted on stylistic, chronological and doctrinal grounds Matsumoto’s assertion that the *Buddhāvataṃsaka* art travelled from Khotan to Kucha. The main point of her criticism is a distinction between the non-Mahāyāna imagery of the cosmological Buddha (the cosmological Buddha as Śākyamuni, in Kucha) and the *Buddhāvataṃsaka* imagery proper of the same (the cosmological Buddha as Vairocana, in Khotan). See also Howard (1991).

at the same time ‘Khotanese’, in that it could have been the product of a composition in the Indian language (most likely Sanskrit) which occurred locally in Indianised Buddhist Khotan or somewhere else in Central Asia.⁶⁸

Besides the historical information regarding Khotanese monks involved with the translation the *Buddhāvataṃsaka*, and the mention of Khotan as a ‘source’ for its first part, there is evidence in Khotanese Buddhist works themselves that the *Buddhāvataṃsaka* – whichever particular text(s) or evolving collection this title may have designated – was important for the Mahāyāna of Khotan.

In the surviving portions of the first chapter of the *Book of Zambasta* there appears to be a discourse about the bodhisattva path and Mahāyāna Buddhism spoken by the Bodhisattva Samantabhadra (“Samantabhadra rightly finished all this well-spoken teaching”, Z 1.188).⁶⁹ This points to a possible relationship with the *Buddhāvataṃsaka* and particularly with its climax, the *Gaṇḍavyūha*, and “makes the first chapter a good start for a manual of Mahāyāna Buddhism” (Maggi 2009, 351).

The *Buddhāvataṃsaka* is also cited in chapter thirteen of the *Book of Zambasta* among practices and texts representative of the “exalted Mahāyāna, the great Buddha-vehicle” (Z 13.13), which include “the liberations of Samantabhadra” (Z 13.12), *Samantabhadra vāmūha* (Skt. *Samantabhadra-vimokṣa*). The liberations of Samantabhadra are again mentioned at Z 13.47, “Prince Sudhana inquired about a hundred and eight great liberations, beginning with those of Samantabhadra. A śrāvaka does not possess even one”, and at Z 13.155, “The śrāvaka does not have Samantabhadra’s liberations [nor] the *Śūramgama*[-*samādhi*]. He cannot perform the acts of a Buddha”. These passages clearly refer to the eight liberations taught by the Bodhisattva Samantabhadra to Sudhana in the *Gaṇḍavyūha*. Furthermore, chapter thirteen also makes reference to the *Daśabhūmika-sūtra*, “The ten vows (*praṇihāna*, Skt. *praṇidhāna*) as they are described in detail in the *Daśabhūmika-sūtra*, [and] the description of the ten *bhūmis*: this is not found at all in the *Āgama*” (Z 13.43). That these references are found precisely in chapter thirteen, the crucial place in the *Book of Zambasta* devoted to establishing the excellence of the Mahāyāna over the vehicle of the *Śrāvakas*, and the structural centre of the collection, entails that scriptures related to (or that became part of) the *Buddhāvataṃsaka* were held in high regard by the Mahāyāna communities of mid-fifth century Khotan. Besides the mention of the *Daśabhūmika-sūtra* at Z 13.43, chapter sixteen of the *Book of Zambasta* follows the eleventh chapter of the *Daśabhūmika-sūtra*.⁷⁰ It can therefore be assumed that the *Daśabhūmika-sūtra* of the *Buddhāvataṃsaka* may have provided the prescriptive schema for the stages of the bodhisattva course. In terms of dating, this shows that the *Book of*

68 On the problems of transmission, composition, redaction and versification of Indian materials in Khotan, see Martini (2011, forthcoming).

69 Judging from the content of the text, it seems likely that Samantabhadra is a bodhisattva rather than the translator of the text as Sander (1988, 536-537) proposes.

70 The *bhūmi*-system of chapter ten certainly awaits more detailed investigation. For a survey of philological studies on the *Daśabhūmika-sūtra*, see Yuyama (1996), and also the introduction to the facsimile edition in Matsuda (1996).

Zambasta is drawing on a relatively late layer of the *Buddhāvataṃsaka*. In chapter ten of the *Book of Zambasta* the equipment of awakening (*bodhisambhāra*) is described as consisting of the six perfections along with compassion. These are then associated with the ten stages of the bodhisattva path, and this section of the chapter “has much in common with the *Daśabhūmikasūtra*”.⁷¹

A paraphrase of the first sixteen stanzas of the *Bhadracaryā-deśanā*, itself a part of the *Buddhāvataṃsaka*, the concluding part of the *Gaṇḍavyūha* that enjoyed great popularity among the followers of Mahāyāna Buddhism ever since the fourth century, can be found in chapter eleven of the *Book of Zambasta* (Z 11.62–77). A Late Khotanese version of the *Bhadracaryā-deśanā* is contained in a miscellaneous *pothī* manuscript in the Pelliot collection together with other *deśanā* texts.⁷² Finally, the *Daśabhūmika* is mentioned twice in the early Late Khotanese *Dharmaśarīra-sūtra* (6v and 7r).⁷³ The passage referring to various Mahāyāna sūtras including not only the *Daśabhūmika* but the *Buddhāvataṃsaka* as well (6v) is not found in any of the other versions, and could be interpreted as a means of legitimating the corpus of Mahāyāna scriptures that were held as particularly authoritative by the community who produced the Khotanese version of the *Dharmaśarīra-sūtra*.⁷⁴

With this excursus on the diffusion of *Buddhāvataṃsaka* in Khotan I hope to have clarified the wider panorama from which chapter three emerges. I now turn to the text itself.

III.1 Textual Relationship Between Chapter Three and T 306

The *Da fangguang fo huayan jing xiuci fen* 大方廣佛華嚴經修慈分 (T 306), which can be tentatively translated as the “Section on the cultivation of loving kindness of the

71 Emmerick (1968, 145). See also Leumann (1933-1936, 126-127).

72 Ms. P 3513. The Old Khotanese paraphrase in the *Book of Zambasta* corresponds to stanzas 4-21 of the Late Khotanese version. Edition, facsimile, translation and glossary of the Khotanese *Bhadracaryā-deśanā* are available in Asmussen (1961). See also Emmerick (1990 and 1992, 20). Editions of the Sanskrit, Tibetan, and three Chinese versions are provided in Sushama Devi (1958). For a comparison between the part of the *Puxian pusa xing yuan zan* 普賢菩薩行願讚, **Samantabhadracaryāpranidhāna* (T 297), attributed to Amoghavajra (705-774 AD), which is also found in the *Buddhāvataṃsaka*, and the different Chinese versions of the latter, see Dessein (2003). On the *Bhadracaryā-deśanā* in Buddhist literature, see Lung-lien (1968, 632-637). Several other *deśanā* texts are known in Late Khotanese. For a survey and references, see Maggi (2009, 375-380).

73 Ms. SI P 49. Edition, translation and glossary in Bongard-Levin and Tyomkin (1969). The text does not correspond to either of the Sanskrit recensions (although it bears some resemblance to the longer one) nor to the Chinese translation (T 766). According to Bongard-Levin and Tyomkin (1969, 70) it could be a translation of an unknown Sanskrit recension. Kumamoto (1996) suggests that it could be an abbreviated paraphrase. For references, see Maggi (2009, 394-396).

74 This passage is also translated in Maggi (2009, 394-396).

Buddhāvataṃsaka-mahāvaiṣṭya-sūtra (大方廣佛華嚴經), is not included in any of the received Chinese *Buddhāvataṃsakas* (T 278 and T 279). The title may suggest that the text is an excerpt (分) from one of the larger collections. However, to the best of my knowledge, there does not seem to be any correspondence between T 306 and any of the sections of either Chinese *Buddhāvataṃsakas*, although the vision, content and imagery are certainly by and large compatible with those typical of the *Buddhāvataṃsaka* as known for example from the *Gaṇḍavyūha* in Sanskrit and from *Fo huayan* 佛華嚴 works in Chinese.⁷⁵

As far as the dating of the texts is concerned, in the case of chapter three, a *terminus post quem non* for the redaction of the text is supplied by the dating of the *Book of Zambasta* from the mid-fifth century. Strictly speaking we do not know if chapter three was reckoned as a *Buddhāvataṃsaka* text in fifth- or sixth-century Khotan. T 306, the translation made by the Khotanese monk *Devendraprajña 提雲般若, is dated to 691 AD,⁷⁶ and was thus produced during the most flourishing period of the *Fo huayan* 佛華嚴 in East Asia. Indeed in the seventh and eighth centuries, the teachings of this school were much intertwined with state ideology both in China and Japan, with Empress Wu Zetian 武則天皇后 (624–705 AD) and Emperor Shōmu 聖武天皇 (701–756 AD) respectively as their imperial patrons.

There appears to be no direct textual relation between the Khotanese and the Chinese version. There are natural stylistic differences, the Khotanese being in verse, the Chinese in prose. Besides the greater succinctness of the Khotanese, which is due to the verse medium, in its descriptions and details the text also tends to be generally less meticulous than T 306. In more general terms, however, a comparative reading highlights the following major differences between the two texts:

- (i) the dwellings of the Buddhas within the particles of the body are not termed Buddha-lands (*buddhakṣetra*) in chapter three but only in the Chinese parallel (佛國, 佛國土);
- (ii) the standard epithet that qualifies the bodhisattvas as *mahāsattva* (摩訶薩), as well as the formulas *mahā-bodhisattva* (大菩薩), and *bodhisattva-mahāsattva* (菩薩摩訶薩)⁷⁷ are found throughout the Chinese version but are absent in the Khotanese;

75 On the origin and early development of the *Buddhāvataṃsaka*, see Ōtake (2007); on the history of its transmission Hamar (2007). For a philological analysis of its beginnings (early history of *Huayan* thought in India and early literary history of the *Buddhāvataṃsaka*), see Nattier (2005 and 2007). For a general overview of *Huayan* thought, see Williams (2009, 129-148). New evidence is provided by the *Anantabuddhakṣetraguṇodbhāvana-sūtra*, from the unique collection of twenty Sanskrit sūtras in a manuscript from the Potala Palace recently published by Vīṇita Tseng (2010). This manuscript is the first direct evidence of the existence of an Indic collection called *Buddhāvataṃsaka Vaiṣṭyapīṭaka*, as clearly indicated by the colophon to the sūtra provided by the collection's compiler, see Tseng (2010/I.1, xix; 2010/II.2, 582, 585 note a). Chinese and Tibetan translations of the sūtras are extant (T 289, T 290, T 278, 26, T 279, 31, and Peking/Ōtani 772, Derge/Tōhoku 104).

76 On the reconstruction of the name of Diyunbanruo 提雲般若 as *Devendraprajña, see Forte (1979).

77 On the epithet *mahāsattva*, see Kajiyama (1982).

- (iii) the Chinese generally tends to make more use of stock Mahāyāna formulations. For example, T 306 has the *Prajñāpāramitā* in lieu of the simple *prajñā* in the triplet *karuṇā/upāya/prajñā* corresponding to stanzas Z 3.14-15, and ‘great compassion’, 大悲, vis-à-vis the simple ‘compassion’, *mulśdi*, of the Khotanese; or the measure of the body of the Tathāgata is specified as being twice as tall as that of men in lieu of the simple statement that the particles forming the characteristic marks of a Buddha are all greater in size than those of other beings (Z 3.95);
- (iv) whereas the Khotanese displays a model based on five realms of birth, *gati* (*ggatā paṃjsa* Z 3.53b), T 306 has a system of six realms (六道). A five-fold system occurs consistently in the *Book of Zambasta*.⁷⁸ The model based on five realms is older than that of six which adds the *asura*, and is generally found throughout the early Buddhist corpus, but with contrasting developments in the sectarian period.⁷⁹ The five- and six-fold models co-exist in different Mahāyāna scriptures and at times even within the same text, for example in the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka-sūtra*. In general, the presence of both models in a scripture can point either to a temporal stratification of the latter, or else to the amalgamation of texts originally upholding different models. In the case of chapter three vis-à-vis its parallel, it seems that the use of a six-fold scheme in the latter could be taken as an indication of a standardisation within the Mahāyāna tradition.

These examples suggest that the Chinese version may have been produced (or have circulated) in an environment in which certain standard Mahāyāna terminology and concepts were in common use. Thus it seems unlikely that the two versions stem from the same or closely related originals, less likely oral and more probably written, and it can be concluded that they are representative of different recensions of the text. In terms of chronology, the elements pointed out above cautiously suggest, on doctrinal grounds, that the Khotanese version may reflect an earlier recension than the Chinese. In the absence of at least a third version in Sanskrit or in another language,⁸⁰ prudence is called for, especially because:

- (i) no confirmation for the anteriority of the Khotanese version can be derived by the later dating of the Chinese translation (end of the seventh century) vis-à-vis the earlier dating of the Khotanese (ca. mid-fifth century);

78 See Z 1.50c, 2.163c, 11.9c, 15.87b, and especially the description of the five realms at the end of chap. seventeen and the beginning of chap. eighteen (see note 16). The so-called *Book of Vimalakīrti* in Late Khotanese also has a five-fold system, see stanza 84, in ed. Maggi (2007, 211) and stanza 105 in ed. Maggi (2004b, 135 [numbered there as stanza 6]). The Khotanese version of the *Karmavibhaṅga*, like the Sanskrit, has six realms, see ed. Maggi (1995, 56-57).

79 The *Kathāvatthu* at Kv 360,1 and the *Mahāvibhāṣā*, T 1545 at T XXVII, 868b2 reject the inclusion of a sixth destiny. The commentary on the *Kathāvatthu* at Kv-a 104,2 identifies the upholders of the existence of six *gatis* as the Andhakas and the Uttarāpathakas. On the alternating *gati*-systems, see Mus (1939, 18-32) and Lamotte (1958, 697-698).

80 No Sanskrit version is known (or has survived), since the only *Buddhāvataṃsaka* texts existing in Sanskrit are the *Daśabhūmika-sūtra*, the *Gaṇḍavyūha*, the *Bhadracarī*, and the recently discovered *Anantabuddhakṣetragūṇodbhāvana-sūtra* and **Dharmaśaṅkha-sūtra/*

- (ii) at least theoretically, a more, versus a less, doctrinally elaborated version of the same text may well have circulated independently at the same time;
- (iii) the elements pointed out above that indicate a more noticeable Mahāyāna standardisation may be the product of the Chinese translators and need not be taken to reflect the underlying Indian text;
- (iv) in the absence of a parallel in an Indian language, the possibility that the text may have been originally redacted in Chinese and thereby translated into Khotanese cannot be ruled out completely, though this would seem quite speculative.

From these considerations it follows that:

- (i) the existence of a Khotanese recension parallel to T 306, translated by the Khotanese monk *Devendraprajña 提雲般若 at the end of the seventh century, proves that the text already existed and was circulating in Khotan and Central Asia by the mid-fifth century at the latest, albeit in a different recension;
- (ii) a case can be tentatively proposed for a Central Asian formation and redaction of the text that features as chapter three of the *Book and Zambasta*. At some point and place, and certainly by the end of the seventh century in China, this work came to be classified as pertaining to the *Buddhāvataṃsaka/Fo huayan* 佛華嚴 tradition.

IV. Meditation Theory and Practice

I now turn to the main aspects of meditation theory and practice present in the text by interpreting its language, imagery and thought-world in the wider context of Buddhist meditation theory and practice.

IV.1 Meditation Dynamics and Dialectic

Since the practice is entirely built on the assumption of the interpenetration of one's body and the world, all the mental states that are imagined or wished for as to the Buddhas and beings imagined within the particles of one's body are in fact mental states that the practitioner himself or herself is attempting to attain. This is the working principle that explains the way the meditation technique functions.

The coextensiveness of the body of the practitioner and the cosmos makes the body a *maṇḍala* in which there is a cosmological correspondence between the micro- and macro-levels of reality. This has also a soteriological potential. For example, the visualisation of the characteristic marks and secondary attributes of the Buddha as formed from the inner particles

Mañjuśrīpariṣecchā-sūtra (on which, see notes 40 and 75), which were probably incorporated in the *Buddhāvataṃsaka* corpus as this grew over time. No Tibetan version appears to have been produced either individually or as part of the *Buddhāvataṃsaka* collection which was translated in the first half of the ninth century (*Sangs rgyas phal po che zhes bya ba shin tu rgyas pa chen po'i mdo*, Peking/Ötani 761, Derge/Tōhoku 44).

of one's body is directly connected to the practitioner's ability to obtain such qualities and his becoming, if not 'being', a Buddha, in that his own matter, or (meditative) experience of matter, more precisely, is coextensive with the physical appearance of a Buddha (*rūpa-kāya*):

“[3.94] One should think of the characteristic marks and secondary attributes of a Buddha as [formed] from such particles. [3.95] They are all greater in size than every being. Thus again one should think of a second Buddha, thus a third, [thus] all Buddhas.”

Because the meditative experience creates on the 'inside' a perfect containment of the outside, and the world is entirely contained within the mental vision of the body of the practitioner, there is a possibility of entirely transforming not just oneself and one's relationship to the world, but ultimately the world itself. The practice has both self-liberating and soteriological implications.

By visualising beings within the particles of one's own body, reflecting on the utter meaninglessness of holding any hostility and anger towards any of them, and envisaging the denizens of the dwellings in one's body as pure and happy, etc., not only is negativity counteracted, but the cognitive premise itself for the arising of negativity finally falls apart. The state of freedom from negativity and benevolence that results is in this way:

- (i) by definition boundless and limitless, in that the paradigm of cosmic coextensiveness and interpenetration which underlies the meditation system relies on the transcendence of self-identification with one's psycho-physical personal boundaries. This is achieved by the particular (ap)perception of the body-mind which is implemented through the practice (see the meditation sequence in the synopsis);
- (ii) literally all-pervasive, in that the person and the world are experienced as one, as a result of the perceptual structure which is implemented by the progression of the meditation.

Now, such removal of boundaries, limits and obstructions is the very base of loving kindness suffusion as this is presented in the early discourses. The theoretical as much as practical novelty found in the approach taken by chapter three is represented by the application of a paradoxical dialectic to loving kindness practice, and vice versa, the conveyance of loving kindness practice into a paradoxical dialectic. This paradoxical dialectic is the principle of universal coextensiveness and mirroring, one of the hallmarks of *Buddhāvataṃsaka* thought.

Although the pure dwellings in the body are specifically termed 'Buddha-fields' only in the Chinese parallel, a label not used in the Khotanese text, here a number of cosmological constructs fundamental to *Buddhāvataṃsaka* as well as in other strands of Mahāyāna thought are nonetheless present:

- (i) the capacity to purify or construct a world-system by meditative power;
- (ii) the notion that such world-system or field is pure or can be purified in as much as the mind is pure or purified by virtue of spiritual practice;

- (iii) all pure lands, all of space and time, are present in this world, even in the smallest particle of dust, all the more in the particles of the bodhisattva’s body once these are ‘seen’ as pure.⁸¹

The working principle of the practice highlighted above, viz. the fact that whatever happens conceptually ‘within the body’ of the practitioner corresponds to the actual mental state developed by him or her, is what is able to make the perceptions and vision developed in the course of the practice ‘real’, i.e., successfully able to affect the individual cognitively.

The basic form of the ‘paradoxical dialectic’ (McMahan 2002, 135) that is embedded in this practice, as well as in a great deal of Mahāyāna thought and practice throughout history, consists of three terms:⁸²

A	ordinary conceptual appropriation of the world, based on thinking in binary oppositions, falsely discriminating each thing in the world as a separate and independent entity
~A	negation of A through the doctrine of dependent arising and emptiness, correctly discriminating all things as lacking inherent existence and dependently arisen
“A”	re-assertion of A in a qualified sense through ~A, re-affirmation of conventional phenomena in the conventionally constituted representation without the delusion and attachment entailed by false ascription of inherent existence to phenomena

In chapter three this paradoxical dialectic is instrumental in deconstructing deluded perception (in the sense of conceptual identification) which stands at the base of the obstructions created by wrath and anger – expressive of the sense of self – by conceptually dismantling it. The dismantling agent is the principle of coextensiveness. The perceptual disentanglement is made all the more powerful by the fact that the visualisation starts precisely from ‘within the body’, that is from within the primary ground for deluded self-identification.

The ‘paradoxical practice’ frees the practitioner from conceptual identification with a separate body and self through an experience that although begun at the level of the ordinary body (as deeply into the body as the smallest possible analytically conceivable unity, the atomic particles, *paramāṇu*), goes through a process of dis-identification from and ‘dis-embodiment’ of the ordinarily perceived body. In particular, a state of emptiness ‘in the body’, in which the notions of within and without no longer apply, is realised. The ordinary perceptive process is purported to be ‘blocked’, to have ceased (*saṃñā niruda*, Z 3.142) and a temporary experience

81 It may be noted with McMahan (2002, 120) that the use of ‘fields’ provides “a way for thinking of awakening in terms of a place or domain rather than an abstract and intangible state of consciousness – a significant move toward the positive portrayal of buddhahood in concrete, visual terms”.

82 This figure is based on the discussion in McMahan (2002, 135-137).

of emancipation from it is reached. According to the text, upon emerging from the last stage of concentration attained through loving kindness, conditioned cognition is dropped. The beings that have been visualised are seen as empty and as not-self. In this way, the visualisation of pure dwellings, and the arising of corresponding states of mind in the practitioner, have been instrumental in the purification of perception via the cessation of the ordinary modality of perception. This entails a radical realignment of the cognitive apparatus of the practitioner.

The three terms of the ‘paradoxical dialectic’ operating in the dynamics of the technique described in chapter three, can be then expressed as follows:

$A_{(body)}$	ordinary (deluded) perception of the individual self contained in the individual body at the base of the wrong perception that leads to wrath and anger
$\sim A_{(body)}$	negation of $A_{(body)}$ through the vision of spatio-temporal coextensiveness of one’s body and the cosmos, etc., whereby wrath and anger are seen as groundless
“A” <small>(body)</small>	re-assertion of $A_{(body)}$ through the review phase in which the imaginary and not-self nature of beings as meditative objects is seen, thereby leading to a vision free from false discrimination

The transition between $\sim A_{(body)}$ and “A”_(body) is developed during the review phase (*section 4l*), in which it is stipulated that the meditation practice described has the potential to bring about the cessation of false imaginations, *vikalpa ysotta*, appropriations, *hīvyauṣce ggūte puṣṣo*, and perception, *saṃñā niruda* (Z 3.142):

[132] Afterwards, one should think thus: ‘[These] pleasant experiences (*suha*) are only imaginary. Such are their natures, as a magic-created thing. [133] Just as appropriation takes place with regard to a magic-created thing, so I control great happy states with regard to beings. [134] Just as the magic-created thing does not exist by nature, so all beings are without existence, without self.

[135] As foolish deer long for a mirage, so the swift senses hasten towards loving kindness. [136] As in the case of the mirage, there is no water there at all, so all the dharmas are not-self. [137] As they appear in a dream, so these things seem to exist. As nothing in a dream exists, so are all these dharmas. [138] A cataract greatly causes partial blindness within. False belief greatly appropriates a self within. [139] For him whose cataract disappears, all blindness disappears. For one whose false belief disappears, the idea of a self has completely disappeared. [140] Through a medicament the cataract [disappears], through knowledge all false beliefs disappear, as things in a dream for one who has woken up. [141] Even if false imaginations (*vikalpa*), appropriations, appear as objects, even so there is loving kindness [meditation, and thereby], the six-fold Brahmā-merits (*brahmā puṇa*, Skt. *brahmapunya*).⁸³ [142] False

83 As shown by Duan Qing (2007, 43-44), the Chinese parallel, T 306, 961a9-10, 此修慈者，

imaginations have vanished, appropriations have been completely removed; perception has been suppressed. This has been called ‘great loving kindness’ (*mahāmaitrā*), [143] whereby one quickly realises full awakening [and] one’s evil deeds completely disappear. [144] Through loving kindness many evil deeds disappear, [as do] serious illnesses. Those who practice thus [lit. ‘they’] will be dear to everybody. [145] Severe woes seen at death do not occur for one who practices thus [lit. ‘for him’]. One quickly obtains a prophecy for awakening. [146] One realises acceptance [of the non-arising of dharmas, Skt. *[anutpattikadharmā]-kṣānti*], [as well as] many meditations. Never again will one be reborn in the lower destinies (Skt. *apāya*).

As in the case of the *Gaṇḍavyūha* and the Buddha’s body studied by McMahan (2002), the ‘paradoxical dialectic’ is not made object of discursive investigation, but primarily transposed “from words to images in the imagination – images that constitute a *visual paradox*”.⁸⁴ This paradox can be seen in the image of the body of the practitioner as this is used in chapter three. From a finite condition in space and time, which is the body-mind of the practitioner in the

乃至未能離於分別，未能不起我我所見，常得六種梵天之福，“Those who cultivate loving kindness, even if they cannot get free from discrimination (*vikalpa*), even if they cannot but arouse the views of self and appropriations, will always receive the six-fold merits of a Brahma-god” (trans. Duan Qing 2007, 43-44), allows us to correct previous interpretations of stanza 3.141, indicating that the expression *kṣā’-padya brahmā puṇa* refers to a six-fold Brahmā-merit rather than to the *brahmavihāras*. Emmerick (1968, 75) rendered the stanza “Whenever things appear as *vikalpa*, appropriations, there is love, the six-fold (*pāramitā*), the *brahma(-vihāra)s*, merits”; see also Leumann (1033-1936, 48). The *brahmapuṇya* formula and its variants – with the Khotanese text mentioning a six-fold type of such merit, without, however, describing it – together with its function within the shared ideologies and practices of Middle-Period Indian Buddhism and the Mahāyāna in India and beyond, still awaits a comprehensive study, which goes beyond the scope of the present article. Here it suffices to bring attention to an occurrence in the *Samghabhedavastu* of the Sarvāstivāda Vinaya, where the fourth (out of four) merit is concerned with loving kindness suffusion, and the passage is worded in the standard discourses phrase for this practice, *Samghabhedavastu*, ed. Gnoli (1978/II, 206, 14-207,9). In fact, a Brahmā-merit resulting from *maitrī*, would be an obvious result of the practice presented by chapter three of the *Book of Zambasta*, and is also linked with the rebirth as Brahmā that is evoked by the practice of the *brahmavihāra* described by the text. This may suggest that the six-fold Brahmā-merit of the Khotanese text could be especially related to the outcome of loving kindness meditation. It is also worth noticing that the phrase also occurs in the *Abhidharmakośa*, where the bhāṣya provides a sūtra quotation and says that the Vaibhāṣika associate this merit with the bodhisattva path, *Abhidharmakośa* 4.124ab, ed. Pradhan (1975, 274), trans. de La Vallée Poussin (1924 [1980]/III, 250). See references given by de La Vallée Poussin (1924 [1980]/III, 250, 1n) and Pāsādika (1989, 93). Likewise, the *Da zhidu lun* 大智度論, associates this type of merit with the bodhisattva, T 1509 at T XXV, 34.309a21-b3, trans. Lamotte (1980/V, 2310), as does the *Za apitan xin lun* 雜阿毘曇心論, *Za apitan xin lun* 雜阿毘曇心論 (**Samyukta-abhidharma-hṛdaya-śāstra*), T 1552 at T XXVIII, 932a26-932b2, trans. Dessein (1998/I, 504-505). The *Lalitavistara* 23.47, ed. Vaidya (1958, 265, 29-39), also presents an interesting correlation in this respect, *bodhicarī anantatulyā abhūdviriyasthāmodgatā / prajñābala upāya maitrābalaṃ brāhmapuṇyaṃ balam*.

here and now, such body-mind comes to pervade all worlds, while at the same time it contains all worlds within it. However, the ‘reassertion of A’ by means of the paradoxical dialectic makes sure that within this interpenetration of the container and the contained each thing remains distinct. Thus conventional identity in the conventional world is maintained, but seen for what it is, as a reflection dependently arisen on the basis of all other conventional identities.

Another aspect of the visually-based conceptualisation presented in chapter three related to somehow paradoxical strategies lies in the act of ‘seeing’ itself. Such process of ‘seeing’ can become in itself “a metaphor for unmediated knowing and the apprehension of what is normatively considered the unconstructed, non-conceptual truth” (McMahan 2002, 111). From this point of view, the constructive aspects of vision, as opposed to the deconstructive efforts to dismantle conceptual structures, comes to the fore: “vision and visionary imagery become means of presenting the Dharma and representing Buddhist views of reality in a positive sense” (ibidem).

It would not be correct to say that chapter three presents a visionary practice, or that it is only based on the visual aspect. In fact, the descriptions and metaphor of the meditation sequence are complemented by the definitions and philosophical analysis of the review phase. A positive and balanced use of both discursive thought and vision appears to characterize the text: thus seeing is used as a metaphor for unmediated knowing and the apprehension of what is normatively considered the unconstructed and non-conceptual, and the unconstructed and non-conceptual is verbalised in the review phase.

IV.2 Meditation Typology

Typologically, the meditation can be classified as a dynamic *samādhi* that starts with what in Theravāda meditation theory is termed “access concentration” (*upacāra-samādhi*), reached through four elements meditation and then develops into a pervasion of loving kindness. This can be evinced from the meditation progression itself in the narrative of the discourse, although the text does not employ a traditional meditation jargon and the literary genre is quite different from that of the early discourses or the commentarial and scholastic literature, in which both the terminology and the stipulations are generally more explicit. In any case, there are several details that back up the typological classification of the practice as a dwelling in a state of expansion and suffusion of the meditative object of loving kindness, with an active, directed use of mental imagery.

For example, the necessity to control the meditative manifestations stipulated as the last point of the unfolding of the practice just before the beginning of the review phase (*section 4l*), explicitly refers to the development undertaken by a monk on the *krtsna* to be taken as an example of the development of one’s visualised objects.⁸⁵ The ever-expanding

85 Z 3.126-131: “They hold many great, jewelled umbrellas. They shine better than the sun, the moon. All beings are greatly happy with these happinesses. All the Lord Buddhas sit greatly happy. Beings are to be remembered with these happinesses. They are to be controlled with

and measureless nature of the images that have been produced, which project in meditative terms the principle of coextensiveness of oneself and the world, makes the comparison with the *kr̥tsna* quite appropriate. The meditation undertaken is an experience of all-pervading and all-pervasive totality, due to the mind becoming one with the all-embracing vision which is brought about by the chosen objects of meditation (beings and Buddhas of the ten directions of the three times, which amounts to saying the whole of space-time). Therefore the necessity for control over such an ever-expanding vision is set forth. A *kr̥tsna*, often understood as a meditation device used as an aid to concentration,⁸⁶ in fact refers to the all-pervasive experience of totality in meditation, which was also the original implication of the term *kaśiṇa* in the Pāli discourses.⁸⁷

The expansive suffusion has the following characteristics:

- (i) absence of the five hindrances and presence of several of those mental factors whose complete development would eventually lead to the attainment of the first absorption (initial and sustained mental application, rapture, happiness and unification of the mind). Although no explicit prescription is made, these can be evinced by the wording of the text and the description of the mental states which occur there. For example, the instruction to think that “[all beings dwell] as if one would bathe a being only with nectar, fortune is upon them, very great contentment, all defilements of beings are completely calmed for them, their minds are calmed. They sit in joy and happiness” (Z 3.102-103) amounts to saying that for the practitioner who is following this instruction and is able to send forth such thoughts, the hindrances to concentration are temporally suppressed, and that the two factors of rapture and happiness are present. The same instruction in the Chinese parallel makes this quite clear: “... the Buddhas are proclaiming for them the course of cultivation of loving kindness, like that which I am cultivating now. Their voice is beautiful [and] pleases the mind [of beings], so that all beings gain supreme pleasure. It is as though one obtained nectar and bathed in it, calming all weariness and pain, bringing rest and ease to the body and to the spirit. It is the same: when the Dharma permeates the mind,

these so that they seem to be with these happinesses. They sit happy, they all stand happy, they all go about happy with all these happinesses. As a monk controls the whole water-*kr̥tsna* (Skt. *apkr̥tsna*), just so is this manifestation to be controlled. Just as a monk controls the blue-*kr̥tsna* (Skt. *nīlakr̥tsna*), so are all to be controlled with these happinesses”. See, for example, the description of the ten spheres of totality (*kr̥tsnāyatana*), thus called because they embrace their respective objects in their entirety, found in the *Abhisamayavyavasthāna* of the *Abhidharmasamuccaya*. The *kr̥tsnāyatana* is explicitly mentioned in the Chinese parallel to Z 3.130-131, see note 48. In Mahāyāna discourses, the *apkr̥tsna* as a *samādhi* occurs for example in the twenty-first chapter of the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka-sūtra*, possessed by the Bodhisattva Gadgasvara, who lives in the world system called Vairocanaśmipratimaṇḍita.

86 As described in Pāli commentarial literature, see van Zeist (1966a).

87 See Anālayo (2009b), and on the Middle Indo-Aryan word *kaśiṇa* von Hinüber (2001, 202-203 [§ 61]).

it removes all defilements, body and mind are pacified, and obtain incessant bliss”.⁸⁸

- (ii) the use of discursive thought (though different from the factor of sustained mental application, *vicāra*) is never let go of during the meditation, since a form of deliberate mental activity is cultivated throughout the visualisation steps, and a subtle but still real form of cognition continues up to the completion of the practice.

IV.3 Four Elements Meditation as the Basis for Loving Kindness Suffusion

We have already seen that chapter three begins with contemplation of the four elements particles:

*cu mā ttātā aṃgga paramāṇyo škonda biśśā
śśandā ūtca bātā dai haṃtsa hāmāta*

These limbs of mine are all made of particles. Earth, water, wind [and] fire have come together (Z 3.31cd-32ab).

In the parallel:

觀察其身上下支節，皆微塵聚，地水火風和合所成。

He contemplates the limbs of his body below and above as all beings made of particles, a combination of earth, water, fire, and wind (T 306, 959b24-25).⁸⁹

The practice of chapter three then progresses to visualising the inter-atomic space, seeing the identity of the inter-atomic space with the space outside the body, thinking of one’s atoms as completely pure, just like beryl stones on the outside and pure gold within, and after that thinking of every being’s atoms as likewise pure. Thus the four elements are the necessary premise for the ensuing contemplation of the pure dwellings in the inter-atomic space, and the detailed visualisation of the marvellous interiors of these abodes. This contemplation plays a

88 佛為演說修慈之行，如我今時之所修習。言音美妙，悅可其心，令諸衆生，獲最上樂。譬如有人，得甘露漿，而以洗沐，息除勞苦，形神休暢。此亦如是，以法沾心，滅諸煩惱，身心寂靜，永得安樂。T 306, 960b10-15, corresponding to Z 3.104, 101-103.

89 Further, later on in the text, in a passage parallel to Z 3.130-131 (step 8: control of the meditative manifestations), T 306, 960c22-24 explicitly presents analysis of the four elements as a counterpart to loving kindness meditation: 譬如比丘，入遍處定，於一切物皆作地解水火風解。以如是解，攝持其心。修慈之人，亦復如是，以慈勝解，莊嚴攝持，“Just as if a monk who enters a meditative sphere through a *kṛtsnāyatana*, he understands that all is made of earth ... water ... fire ... he understands [that all is made of] wind. By understanding in this way, he comprehends and holds it in mind. It is the same with a person who cultivates loving kindness. Because he is determined on loving kindness, he adorns himself with it, comprehends and holds it [in mind]”.

key role in the practice, in that it represents the very first step of the meditative sequence. The body elements and the particles, which provide the basis for visualising beings, Buddhas, etc. in chapter three, are aspects of matter (*rūpa*) as the first of the aggregates affected by clinging. They are rapidly moving groups of phenomena through which the sense of self comes into being by way of identification — if one fails to see their impermanent state.

In what follows, I take a brief look at the Buddhist conception of matter and its meditative perception in order to try to ascertain the full implications of the way this lays the foundation for the meditation technique developed in chapter three.

IV.3.1 Four Elements and Particles as Matter

In early Buddhist thought matter is defined as four elemental qualities. A distinction is drawn between primary material elements, the *mahābhūtas* (earth, water, fire and wind),⁹⁰ and secondary, derived material elements (*upādā-rūpa*), although no explicit explanation of the relationship of derivation between the two classes seems to be laid down.⁹¹ This implies that both the anatomical body and the body processes, *kāya*, are seen as “derived” from material form. Later, the qualitative aspect of the elements is much emphasised in the Pāli Abhidhamma and commentarial elaboration taking the qualities of solidity, fluidity, heat and mobility to be atomic qualities to be investigated within each single atom of matter, which accommodates the evolving atomic theories in medieval India, but somehow loses perspective of what the original meditative exercise is actually about.⁹²

90 See, e.g., MN I 152 and MN I 185. Here I use Pāli terminology as I take the Pāli *Nikāyas* as my main source for the early Buddhist view, for the sake of convenience due to the accessibility of the Pāli corpus. Since I am not dealing with particularly controversial points, this seems sufficient to present the doctrinal inheritance of early Buddhism which lays the foundation for all subsequent developments, without giving reference to the parallels in Chinese, and the fragmentary materials surviving in Sanskrit.

91 Anālayo (2003, 203, 10n) suggest that the expression “material form derived from the four elements” (e.g., at MN I 53) might “simply refer to those bodily parts or processes that are predominantly “derived” (*upādāṇa*) from the respective element, such as the harder bodily parts like hair and bones in the case of the element earth, the liquid bodily parts like blood and urine in the case of the element water, the process of digestion in the case of the element fire, and the breath in the case of the element air”. According to the *Karmasiddhiprakaraṇa* 43, this distinction refers to the connection between the physical body as a ‘collection’, or a ‘grouping of parts’, and the parts of the body, in that the body here is referred to as a special aggregation of faculties, material elements and derived matter, ed. Lamotte (1936, 202, 21ff) and trans. (ibid., 257).

92 See Dhs 175 and 177, Vibh 82-84, Vism 364ff (XI 87 and 93). In Pāli Abhidhammic and commentarial literature, in addition to the four elements, derived materiality comes to count up to twenty-three or twenty-four (with the inclusion of the heart-base) types of secondary matter, see Karunadasa (1989, 31-116) and Bodhi (1999, 235-242). It is also in the Pāli Abhidhamma (*Paṭṭhāna*) that the idea that the *upādā-rūpas*, derived elements, are always coexistent and

The elements are at the same time qualities that can be experienced through the body as that which constitutes ‘my’ body. Here ‘body’ (*kāya*) is an umbrella term for one’s embodiment.⁹³ According to the Buddhist view of the physical world, “the elusive metaphorical entity that we call ‘matter’ is but our own mental construction” (Romkin 2005, 48),⁹⁴ which amounts to saying that not just the world of the mind, but also that of matter, is built as an emotional-cum-cognitive response to the experience of being sentient. Matter, in order to be known, requires to be ‘taken in’ as a mental object. Thus, the aggregate of matter (*rūpa-khandha*) as a source of self-identification and clinging is definable and knowable in terms of certain qualitative mental experiences which are the four elements. These experiences, and thereby the body, are in a permanent state of turbulence.

As to meditative investigation of the four elements according to the early Buddhist approach, this is specifically about insight into the not-self and empty nature of the body. In this instance the focus is on the notion of self-identity as a product of the process of identification: the body appropriated as a fulcrum of reference for self-identification is seen for what it is, a mere cluster of four elements. This is figuratively expressed by the simile of the cow cut into pieces by a butcher (“Just as though a skilled butcher or his apprentice had killed a cow and was seated at a crossroads with it cut up into pieces, so too he reviews this same body...”), which points to the reduction of a solid notion of self-identity to a sum of component parts, thereby undermining the very foundation for a compact idea of selfhood.⁹⁵

necessarily dependent on the *mahābctas*, is found. Thus, as to what matter actually entails, each facet of matter (*rūpa-dhamma*) is postulated as if it were a discrete entity, but in actual fact its occurrence is inseparably associated with a set of other *rūpa-dhammas*. Although the genesis of *rūpa-dhammas* in the Theravādin tradition is explained as due to four origins (karma, consciousness, nutriment and temperature), the early discourses appear to be chiefly concerned with the occurring of matter as the first of the five aggregates affected by clinging, rather than with a ‘cosmogony’ of form and its analytical investigation. What is important is to correctly assess the category of matter as subjectively experienced rather than aiming at knowing it for its own sake. The importance of directly knowing matter comes to the fore in the definition of liberation as being free from being reckoned in terms of any of the five aggregates (see e.g., MN I 487). Further, direct knowledge according to reality of the advantage, disadvantage, and release with regard to the four elements (SN II 170 and SN II 172), to the five aggregates affected by clinging (SN III 28 and SN III 29), and to the nature, arising, cessation and path leading to the cessation of the five aggregates affected by clinging are among the insights that according to a number of early discourses were gained by the Buddha before he could claim to have reached full awakening, see Anālayo (2009a, 129-130).

93 Elements of the body as an object of meditation, in the framework of mindfulness directed to the body (*kāyagātasati*), are one of the possible perspectives of contemplation of bodily experience. Generally speaking, the body can be contemplated from the point of view of its constituent anatomical parts or of its processes (respiration, changing of placement in time and space, etc.).

94 For a discussion of the aggregate of matter in the context of the Theravādin categorisation of dhamma(s), see Romkin (2005, 48-50).

95 *Dakkho goghātako vā goghātakantevāsī vā gāviṃ vadhitvā cātummahāpathe bilaso*

Beyond insight into the true nature of one's body, four elements meditation can broaden its scope towards what is external by realising that the whole material world is likewise a conglomeration of the four elemental qualities. In this way, matter is perceived as self-less and essence-less in all its levels from the radical epistemological perspective of the subject's experiential process.⁹⁶

This leads me to look at another approach to the four elements, more specifically oriented to discerning the dynamics of materiality in order to fully discern matter as the first of the five aggregates affected by clinging, on the basis of which the remaining four aspects of mentality (*nāma*) arise. Such an approach is found in the perspective on the four elements as taught by a contemporary Theravāda meditation master, the Burmese monk Pa-Auk Sayadaw (b. 1934). This approach is based on scholastic Theravāda developments of the early Buddhist teachings, and its historical background is provided, as in the case of U Ba Khin and his disciple S.N. Goenka I mentioned before, by the *vipassanā* revival movement which started between the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century in Burma. In Pa-Auk's tradition meditation on the four elements is used to reach access concentration, as an alternative to the use of mindfulness of breathing, the other method recommended in order to develop concentration. The four elements can also be employed as an antidote to mental proliferation and in order to remove the impediments to meditation, much in the same way as mindfulness of breathing. The four elements are a technique that combines concentration and insight, although it is held that they can only lead up to access concentration, and not to absorption, since the object of meditation is always changing due to the continuous arising and passing away of the four elements, which rules out the possibility of entering deep absorption.⁹⁷ In the light of the concentration and clarity obtained through mindfulness directed to the four

paṭivibhajitvā nisinno assa, evam eva kho, bhikkhave, bhikkhu imam eva kāyaṃ yathāhitam yathāpañihitam dhātuso paccavekkhati: atthi imasmim kāye paṭhavīdhātu āpodhātu tejodhātu vāyodhātūti, MN 10 at MN I 58, 1, or DN 22 at DN II 294, 18. The simile is also found in the *Śikṣāsamuccaya*, ed. Bendall (1902, 210), and with a variation featuring six instead of four elements in the *Yogalehrbuch*, ed. Schlingloff (1964, 165), where it entails an actual visualisation practice. See also Ruegg (1967, 162), Yamabe (1999a, 37-40), Yamabe (2002, 130), and Yamabe (2006, 327).

96 Anālayo (2003, 151-152) points out a further cosmogonic dimension to this contemplation presented in the *Mahāhatthipadopama-sutta*, MN 28 at MN I 184.

97 An additional motivation adduced by the Pa-Auk tradition for the impossibility of reaching absorption with four elements meditation is that “to see the four elements as *rūpa-kalāpas* is to see ultimate materiality (*paramattha rūpa*), and to see ultimate materiality is deep and profound. One cannot attain *jhāna* with ultimate reality as object”, Pa-Auk (2003, 187). This refers to the impossibility of attaining *jhāna* when the object of meditation is any of the three characteristics of the material (and, for that matter, mental) aggregates, since this is a dynamic vision incompatible with absorption beyond access level. However, the notion of “ultimate materiality” as ultimate *realia* in the metaphysical and gnoseological sense is influenced by the shift in perspective from the Nikāyas and early Abhidhamma to later Abhidhamma developments as reflected in Pa-Auk Sayadaw's approach, which takes commentarial literature as the norm for meditation practice.

elements, the impermanent, unsatisfactory and not-self predicament of the five aggregates affected by clinging and eventually its cause, dependent arising, can be seen. The advantage of the use of four elements meditation, according to the method of Pa-Auk Sayadaw, is that at the end of this exercise one would have developed the ability to thoroughly discern the matter component of the five aggregates.

The doctrinal setting that informs this technique is provided by Theravāda scholasticism: the three broad categories in which the physical and mental occurrences of the phenomena of conditioned reality as presented in consciousness and classified according to the system of the Pāli Abhidhamma are consciousness (*citta*), associated mentality (*cetasika*), and materiality or physicality (*rūpa*), with *nibbāna* as a fourth, unconditioned (*asaṅkhata*) category.⁹⁸ In fact such categorisation is shared by both the Theravāda and the Sarvāstivāda Abhidharmic systems, although the individual items within the categories change in number and thus in the total count, and in some cases also in doctrinal understanding. In this scheme, Pa-Auk's four elements meditation is placed within the sphere of the third of these categories.

As to the notion of atomic constitution of matter which, as we have seen, is the starting point for the meditation described in chapter three, the way this is used within the framework of Pa-Auk's technique provides a paradigm different from its articulation in the Khotanese text. The Theravāda exegetical texts do not present an atomistic theory corresponding to that elaborated by the Sarvāstivāda tradition, and do not mention the idea of a unitary atom, nor the term *paramāṇu* employed by the Khotanese text and probably by its Indian antecedent. However, the post-canonical Theravāda texts on which Pa-Auk's tradition is based contain a concept, expressed by the term *kalāpa*, which means 'package', that corresponds to the collective atom of the Sarvāstivāda-Vaibhāṣika, in that a *kalāpa* is the smallest material unit that contains the elements.⁹⁹ This concept is meditatively explored in the approach to the four elements.¹⁰⁰ The

98 This four-fold categorisation, explicitly stated for the first time in the *Abhidharmavatāra* (c. 430CE), can be drawn from the *Dhammasaṅgaṇī* and other *Abhidhamma* treatises presupposing its ideas, see Romkin (2005, 48-49).

99 This notion first appears in the commentaries to the *Dhammasaṅgaṇī* and the *Vibhaṅga*, as well as in the *Visuddhimagga*, see Karunadasa (1989, 142-165) and Romkin (2005, 58). Bodhi (1999, 14) notes that the organisation of material phenomena into groups (*kalāpa*), though implied by the distinction between primary elements of matter and derived matter, is among the conceptions "that are characteristic of the Commentaries but either unknown or recessive in the Abhidhamma Piṭaka itself".

100 The atomistic conception of matter and the idea of material atoms is explicitly stated for the first time in the *Abhidharmahrdaya* (ca. second century AD), and given a detailed formulation in the *Mahāvibhāṣā*. Later, it plays an important role in the works of Vasubandhu and Saṃghabhadra. The Sarvāstivāda-Vaibhāṣika position distinguishes between unitary atom (*dravya-paramāṇu*) and the collective atom (*saṃghāta-paramāṇu*). The unitary atom is the smallest unity of matter. Albeit part-less and non-dimensional, it consists of the four primary elements and never comes into being or ceases in isolation, but always in combination with other atoms. Thus we have clusters of atoms which emanate and discontinue simultaneously with each other. The smallest collective atom with the status of a unit consists of a minimum of eight elements, the four

peculiarity of the use of the four elements in Pa-Auk's method is that investigation of matter entails a comprehensive analytical investigation of the individual elements that constitute it. These are specifically the abovementioned 'form-packages', *rūpa-kalāpas*. Thus Pa-Auk Sayadaw's approach appears to reflect the restructuring that early Buddhist epistemology underwent through the building of the commentarial edifice, aiming at total philosophical accountability of reality.¹⁰¹ This treatment of four elements meditation is quite different from its utilisation in chapter three: with this survey and a practical example I hope to have provided a background against which to better appraise the theoretical and practical position of four elements meditation as this appears in chapter three of the *Book of Zambasta*.

To sum up, as far as chapter three is concerned, meditation on the four elements of the body is used at the outset as a means of deepening concentration. In particular, its function is:

- (i) to go beyond the ordinary conceptual identification with the body as a solid entity by bringing about a correct perception in accordance with reality through contemplation of the body experience in terms of the four elements;
- (ii) to deconstruct the conditioned perception of the body so as to create the right cognitive premise able to bring about dis-identification and detachment from the experience of the 'external' body (i.e., of the five external senses), which are necessary for the attainment of deeper concentration;

primary and the four secondary elements. The ontological and phenomenological status of these atoms has been much debated in the history of Sarvāstivāda-Vaibhāṣika and Sautrāntika thought (on the category of matter in the Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma, see Dhammajoti (2007, 242ff)). However, the view that material reality can be reduced to discrete momentary atoms, namely, the four primary elements, and that atomic reality is understood as change are a shared agreement: as Romkin (2005, 57) remarks, "change itself is the very nature of atomic reality rather than its being made of enduring substances the qualities of which undergo change". On the development of the notion of atomic dharmas, see Karunadasa (1967, 31-32) and Romkin (2005, 56-59).

101 For example, stipulations such as the one found in the *Mahāgopālaka-sutta* that knowing materiality as it really is means "knowing that all materiality of whatever kind consists of the four great elements and materiality derived from the four great elements" (MN 33 at MN I 220), and the one found in the *Aparijānana-sutta* that without directly knowing and fully understanding which covers all mentality, materiality, and their causes with the three types of full understanding one is incapable of destroying suffering (SN 35.26 at SN IV 8) are reinterpreted with an emphasis on the need for an exhaustive knowledge of all materiality, as well as mentality, see Pa-Auk (2003, 12ff and 189ff). Thus what can be defined as a totality agenda of all-out accountability of the real is put into operation through an all-inclusive technology of meditation (I adopt the definition of the *dhmma*-lists and their commentarial elaborations as "totality formulas" after Kim (1999, 37), who derives it from Gethin (1986, 40), where the *mātikā* of the five *khandhas* are defined as a "totality formula"). This testifies to the practical consequence of the elaboration of the dhamma-theory: a bi-univocal correspondence between the epistemological level and a realistic, objectified conception of the conscious experience is sought, and from these premises naturally follows an emphasis on an analytical comprehensiveness of the practice based on the four elements, as is taught in Pa-Auk Sayadaw's tradition.

- (iii) to create as a result the right environment (free from the habitual cognitive entanglements) for the subsequent progression into deeper concentration, in which the ‘external body’ is no longer active, and the ‘inner body’ can be freely used through imaginative conceptualisation.

Thus, the four elements seem to be used in a way that is compatible with earlier Buddhist meditation, whereas the following step, loving kindness ‘in-built in the body’, represents a theoretical and practical innovation.

Technically speaking, the *samādhi* is based on a process of visualisation, although the text (and its Chinese parallel) do not make use of a lexicon semantically related to ‘seeing’ or ‘visualising’. The instructions are all based on words for ‘thinking’, ‘contemplating’, ‘reflecting’. A process of visualisation, however, is inherent in this particular use of conceptualisation. Probably a ‘conceptual’ rather than a visual language is also preferred due to the setting (the inside of the body) which is the theatre of such imaginative conceptualisations. The overall meditative setting is in fact internal, and the development of loving kindness is based on a ‘visual conceptualisation’ built in the body seen in its atomic constitution and the inter-atomic space.

As far as the relationship between the ‘body’ and loving kindness is concerned, although the idea of a loving kindness meditation built on the body is not known in earlier meditative traditions, a perspective on the way loving kindness is related to the body can be found in the framework of the four establishments of mindfulness.¹⁰² Since the four elements which prepare the ground for the loving kindness *samādhi* fall within such a framework, a brief excursus into this aspect may be of use.

IV.4 The Body and Loving Kindness

An instance of a perspective on the four elements which combines awareness of their qualities to the cultivation of analogous qualities of loving kindness (as well as compassion) is found in one of the early discourses, the *Mahārāhulovāda-sutta*. The discourse depicts a meditative sequence from an analysis of the body into its constituent elements (which besides the four elements includes space as fifth), through using these elements as examples for developing a mental attitude of patience and forbearance, and on to the practice of loving kindness as an antidote to ill will.¹⁰³ A further example providing a relationship between the practice of the

¹⁰² Throughout the article, I follow Anālayo’s rendering of *satipaṭṭhāna* as “establishment of mindfulness”. For the rationale beneath this translation, see Anālayo (2003, 29-30) and Anālayo (2006a, 235-236).

¹⁰³ MN 62 at MN I 423, with a parallel in the Chinese *Ekottarika-āgama*, EĀ 17.1, trans. Huyen-Vi (1993, 213-222). In this discourse Rāhula asks the Buddha for instructions on mindfulness of breathing, and in the Pāli version the description of mindfulness of breathing is preceded by a detailed instruction on contemplation of the five elements (which is absent in the Chinese version), followed by the *brahmavihāras*, contemplation of impurity, and perception of impermanence.

brahmavihāras and contemplation of the elements, in this case by developing the perception of their not-self characteristic, is found in another early discourse, the *Mahāthhipadopama-sutta*.¹⁰⁴

Otherwise, in the early discourses the practice of loving kindness and meditation on the body are placed within different sets of instruction and the relationship between them is not explicitly stipulated. The development of loving kindness can play the function of balancing excessive negativity which is naturally provoked by contemplation of the impure and, as we have seen, the range of practice covered by the meditative chapters of the *Book of Zambasta* can be related to the scheme of the eight deliverances (*aṣṭavimokṣa*), with the deliverance through beauty (*śubha-vimokṣa*) of loving kindness marking the shift between the first two and the third deliverance. From this point of view, As I have already suggested in Part II of this article, the meditative chapters of the *Book of Zambasta* provide a paradigm of practice that can be read in the light of the eight deliverances sequence.¹⁰⁵ In an important meditation text, the *Damoduolo chanjing* 達摩多羅禪經 (T 618, otherwise known as the ‘Dharmatrāta Manual’), which was translated into Chinese by Buddhahadra in the early fifth century, the section on the *samādhi* of the four immeasurables is placed right after the sections on examination of the corpse and examination of the elements. This arrangement, when used as a practice sequence, can be

On the absence of the five elements in the Chinese version, Anālayo (2011a/I, 348-349) explains that “When evaluating this substantial difference between the two versions, it comes somewhat unexpected when the Buddha, instead of directly replying to Rāhula’s question, should give such a detailed exposition of other types of meditation before tuning to the topic about which he had been asked, namely of mindfulness of breathing. Notably, a discourse in the *Āṅguttara-nikāya* and its parallel in the *Samyukta-āgama* [AN 4:177 at AN II 164, 26 and SĀ 465 at T II, 118c29] record an instruction given by the Buddha to Rāhula on the four elements. This leaves open the possibility that the instructions given by the Buddha to his son Rāhula on contemplating the elements were originally associated with the occasion described in the *Āṅguttara-nikāya* and *Samyukta-āgama*, and during the course of oral transmission this instruction came to be added to the *Mahārāhulovada-sutta*. The Pāli commentary to the *Mahārāhulovada-sutta* [Ps III 138], however, explains that the Buddha took up the subject of the elements on the present occasion in order to give a more detailed exposition of his earlier instruction on contemplating the aggregate of form. This commentarial gloss would explain why the Buddha first gave a detailed exposition of the short instruction he had delivered on the road to Rāhula and only then took up the practice of mindfulness of breathing. In fact, according to the Pāli version it was Sāriputta, and not the Buddha, who had told Rāhula to practise mindfulness of breathing. The Buddha had rather asked him to contemplate the true nature of the aggregate of form, an instruction of which the exposition of contemplating the elements would indeed be a more detailed exposition”; see also Anālayo (2005, 97-98) and Anālayo (2003, 152).

104 MN 28 at MN I 186, with its Sarvāstivāda parallel MĀ 30 at T I 464b, which specifically qualifies each element as being free from hostility, 不憎惡, T I 464c11, 465b1, 465c20, and 466b13.

105 See the section on “Chapter Three and the Other Meditation Chapters of the Book of Zambasta”.

regarded a counterpart to the four elements meditation followed by loving kindness *samādhi* in the practice of chapter three of the *Book of Zambasta*.¹⁰⁶

Since loving kindness suffusion is all-encompassing, the experience of oneself as a ‘body’ (*kāya*) is inherently included in the field of loving kindness. Though in a state of loving kindness there is no distinction between oneself and others, still the process subjectively apprehended in terms of ‘one’s body’ comes to be encompassed by loving kindness.

From a Buddhist perspective, the body is one of the parts of subjective experience that need to be understood, featuring as such as the object of the first of the four establishments of mindfulness. From the standpoint of the meditation instructions in the third chapter, mindfulness directed to the body appears to be an essential precondition for the practice of loving kindness, and remains of continuous relevance throughout. The dissolution of any aversion is thus practically implemented precisely in the body. That is, mindfulness directed to the body leads over to an actual state of loving kindness. The entire practice of loving kindness is experienced within one’s own body and thereby extended to all beings, in all times and all places, because, once physical and cognitive boundaries have been removed, the pleasant bodily and mental sensations and perceptions one experiences are also the totality of one’s experience of the whole world. As opposed to ill will – defined in the early discourses as a bodily tie (*vyāpada kāyagantha*), one of the knots (*gantha*) that bring about physical discomfort¹⁰⁷ – loving kindness is in fact primarily an experience of ease and comfort in the body itself.

IV.5 Meditation Object and Doctrinal Background: *Mahāmaitrī*

A challenging point in the interpretation of the cultivation of chapter three is represented by a correct evaluation of its meditative object, (great) loving kindness (*mahāmaitrī*), in the context of the Mahāyāna developments in the interpretation of the *brahmavihāras* (or immeasurables, *apramāṇa*).¹⁰⁸

First of all, we are confronted with a few apparent doctrinal tensions which parallel the issue raised by the relationship between compassion and not-self (and thereby emptiness) and its “ontological” implications, a problem that has not escaped the attention of the tradition: while meditation techniques based on loving kindness and on the other *brahmavihāras* basically

¹⁰⁶ On the content of this manual, see Yamabe (2009, 62ff).

¹⁰⁷ See DN III 230, 18-19. On the physically felt sense of ill will, see Anālayo (2009a, 47-48 and 53).

¹⁰⁸ On the modifications with regard to the motive, scope and implementation of the immeasurables once these become integrated into the scheme of the bodhisattva path, for example their association with the six perfections that supersede the factors of awakening (*bodhipāṅśika-dharmas*) as regular concomitants of the immeasurables, and the different object and domain in which they operate, see Pagel (1995, 136ff). On the formula of the four immeasurables in Khotanese, see Degener (1986).

exploit the deconstruction of self-view in order to enhance correct cognition by leaving no adequate objects for mental states such as aversion, cruelty, etc., such perceptual deconstruction would at the same time leave the development of positive mental attitudes short of a positive object to focus on. On the other side, the attitude of loving kindness has been considered potentially problematic for maintaining the perspective of not-self in that it would take beings as “individually existing” for its referents. Both the Mahāyāna-sūtra and śāstra traditions have elaborated various strategies in order to clarify these issues, though here we could note that in the early discourses this problem is non-existent, as the *brahmavihāras* are usually meditatively developed without having persons as their object, just as a radiation in all directions. It is only in specific situations, such as when being cut up by bandits, described in the *Kakacūpama-sutta*, where loving kindness is directed towards them,¹⁰⁹ and in the so-called Discourse on loving kindness,¹¹⁰ that beings are brought in. In both cases the description seems rather to be as an expression of the attitude that evolves from the practice, whereas the real practice itself is non-conceptual and does not take beings as its object, even if when coming out of it one is able to radiate loving kindness towards beings. Another non-existent problem underlying this discussion in the later tradition is that not-self does not mean non-existent, from the perspective of the early discourses. It is only once not-self becomes a ‘*vāda*’ and impermanence as change is turned into total disappearance at every moment that this ‘problem’ arises and the tradition is confronted with the contradiction resulting from the doctrinal evolution, and needs to amend it. However, as highlighted by Stephen Jenkins (1999, 181-182), “... an acute awareness of this issue is found in Mahāyāna literature. It is extremely common in the sūtras to find an expression of universal compassion immediately followed or preceded by a statement that no sentient being exists. Possibly the most common formulation of the bodhisattva’s resolve to liberate others is that the bodhisattva determines to save all sentient beings despite the fact that no sentient beings exist”. The difficulty is addressed for example by maintaining the possibility of loving kindness directed to beings who, in fact, are just dream-like, and the necessity for bodhisattvas to regard all beings as an illusion.¹¹¹ Further, an ingenious solution for correlating

109 MN 21 at MN I 129, 15.

110 AN 4.125 and AN 4.126.

111 For a discussion of these problems and references to the relevant passage in primary sources, see Jenkins (1999, 163ff), and also Maithrimurthi (2004, 167ff [= 104ff]) on this issue in the Theravāda tradition. This point is also taken up in the Late Khotanese *Mañjuśrīnairātmyāvātāra-sūtra*, ed. Bailey (1951/1981, 127, 282-283), *naiṣṭa pūḍgala āttama. Maittrai tī bāvana kauma? Khu vā ma mvaḍettau karūṇa, upākṣa khu-vadya bvaṇa?*, “There is no individual, self. What then is meditation on loving kindness? How is sympathetic joy, in which way are compassion, equanimity to be understood here?”, trans. with modifications after Emmerick’s unpubl. translation. I understand *ma*, which is left untranslated by Emmerick, as a form of *mara* ‘here’, ‘in this context’, though it could also be a form of the oblique case of the first singular personal pronoun. On *khu-vadya* “how”, “in which way”, < **khu-pandia*-, see Degener (1989, 123, s.v. *khu-vadia*-). The subsequent stanzas, *ibid.*, lines 283-289, present a number of similes that illustrate how all beings have to be viewed (as that which has been conjured up by magic, etc.), that is “by nature are all beings there rightly to be recognised as non-beings”.

different levels of practice of the *brahmavihāras* to graded levels of wisdom is put into place, for example, in the *Abhidharmakośa*. Here the conventional standpoint of compassion directed to beings, *sattvālabhana*, is differentiated from the superior perspective which has the general characteristic of dharmas as its objects, *dharmasāmānyalakṣaṇa-ālabhana*.¹¹² An equivalent scholastic solution to the problem posed by the relation between not-self and the practice of the *brahmavihāras* is found in the Mahāyāna scheme of the three objects (*ālabhana*) of the *brahmavihāras*. The formulation found in the *Bodhisattvabhūmi* seems to me to be particularly useful to better understand the nature of the object of loving kindness as well as that of loving kindness as a meditation object in the context of chapter three:

And how does a bodhisattva cultivate the four immeasurables, [namely] loving kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy [and] equanimity?’ ‘In brief, the bodhisattva cultivates the four immeasurables according to three modalities: [respectively] having beings as their object, having the dharmas as their object and having no object ... By suffusing the ten directions with a mind of loving kindness, [the bodhisattva] dwells with a strong resolve toward beings. This should be understood as loving kindness with beings as its object. Afterwards, perceiving just the dharmas, and seeing just the dharmas as the [underlying] substratum of the verbal convention [called] “beings”, [the bodhisattva] cultivates such [kind of] loving kindness [that has dharmas as its object]. This should be understood as loving kindness with dharmas as its object. Then he cultivates loving kindness without falsely imagining the dharmas. This should be understood as loving kindness with no object. The same applies to [lit. ‘has to be known with regard to’] compassion, sympathetic joy and compassion as with loving kindness having beings as [their] object, dharmas as [their] object, and having no object.’¹¹³

Then at lines 289-292 it is stated that the similes are intended as a meditation instruction, and that once one sees all beings thus, one produces compassion from them, and on this basis “best loving kindness” (*maitra hastama*), “truly supreme compassion” (*mvaśja tattva hvāṣṭa*), “best sympathetic joy” (*mvadetta hasta*), and “excellent equanimity” (*pīrmāttama upekṣe*) are developed. At lines 293ff it is explained that according to the ultimate sense beings do not exist, nor does awakening, nor the Buddha-dharmas, that there is no distinction between the Buddhas and beings in that all dharmas are just one dharma, and thereby as the one being is a non-being, the beings and aggregates are not-self, non inherently existent, all beings are non-beings, like what is magic-created, etc. Thus this passage appears to be in line with doctrinally similar contexts quoted above, and it is particularly interesting in that it assigns a foundational role to compassion for the development of the “great” immeasurables.

112 *Tattvamanaskāreṇa hi kleśa prahāṇam, sattvālabhanatvāc ca na taiḥ prahāṇam, dharmasāmānyalakṣaṇa manaskāreṇa hi kleśaprahāṇam, Abhidharmakośa-vyākhyā*, ed. Wogihara (1932-1936 [1971], 687), trans. de la Vallée Poussin (1980, 200).

113 *Katham ca bodhisattvaḥ catvāry apramāṇāni bhāvayati, maitrīm karuṇām muditām upekṣām? Iha bodhisattvaḥ samāsatas trividhāni catvāry apramāṇāni bhāvayati: sattvālabhanāni, dharmālabhanāny anālabhanāni ca ... maitreṇa cetasā daśadiśaḥ spharitivā sattvādhimokṣeṇa viharati. Iyam asya sattvālabhanā maitrī veditavyā. yat punar dharmamātrasamjñī dharmamātre sattvopacāram āśayataḥ sampāśyaṃs, tām eva maitrīm bhāvayati. iyam asya dharmālabhanā maitrī veditavyā. yat punar dharmān apy avikalpayāṃs tām eva maitrīm bhāvayati. iyam asya*

That a text that partakes of the *Buddhāvataṃsaka* tradition such as chapter three reveals, upon closer inspection, the presence of such philosophical positions, seems to be only natural since *Buddhāvataṃsaka* thought – from which chapter three emerged – relied, among other strands, on the early Indian advocates of Yogācāra philosophy, and, in China, on the later ones as well.¹¹⁴

This much clarified, I will now, before concluding, briefly return to some aspects of loving kindness cultivation as ‘great loving kindness’, as is explicitly termed at the conclusion of the text (Z 3. 143). The mind of loving kindness is meditatively ‘grown great’¹¹⁵ in the suffusion. Just as the spiritual quality of compassion (*karuṇā*) is superseded by an objectless (*anālambanā*) great compassion (*mahākaruṇā*) in most Mahāyāna contexts, so *maitrī* becomes *mahāmaitrī* when it no longer arises in relation to a specific object, but is spontaneous and all-pervasive,¹¹⁶

anālambanā maitrī veditavyā. yathā sattvālambanā dharmālambanā ’nālambanā maitrī evaṃ karuṇā muditopekṣā ’pi veditavyā, Bodhisattvabhūmi, ed. Wogihara (1936 [1971], 241-242), or ed. Dutt (1966, 166). On the three kinds of loving kindness see also Lamotte (1970/III, 1245, 1250-1254, and 1272-1273), and the discussion and textual references in Pagel (1995, 137ff).

114 Takasaki (1966, 96) quoted in Silk (2000, 273, 31n) goes as far as to suggest that the origins of the Yogācāra school are to be sought among Sarvāstivāda yogācāras who gave special attention to the practice of the *Buddhāvataṃsaka*’s ‘mind-only’.

115 See the standard formulation of deliverance of mind through loving kindness in the early discourses, in which the mind has ‘grown great’ (*mahaggatena*), see e.g., MN 97 at MN II 195, 6.

116 Great loving kindness is associated with solicitude for beings, great compassion, and the immeasurable and incalculable Buddha-qualities in the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*, in the stock phrase *yā ca hitaiṣitā, yā ca mahāmaitrī, yā ca mahākaruṇā, ye cāprameyāsamkhyeyā buddhaguṇāḥ*, see ed. Wogihara (1932 [1973], 327, 340, 343, and 345) or ed. Vaidya (1960, 69, 72, 74, and 75). With regard to the role played by great loving kindness in the Mahāyāna, in the chapter thirty of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā*, Sadāprarudita, in his reply to the merchant’s daughter’s question regarding the kind of qualities and the excellence of qualities which he would generate in himself by his wish to honour the Bodhisattva Dharmodgata, lists great loving kindness among other crucial qualities which result from the practice of the bodhisattva who trains in the perfection of wisdom and skilfulness in means, see ed. Vaidya (1960, 246), or ed. Wogihara (1973, 948): *sarvasattvānāṃ prati śaraṇaṃ bhaviṣyāmo anuttarāṃ samyaksambodhim abhisambudhya suvarṇavarṇaṃ ca kāyaṃ pratilapsyāmahe, dvātriṃśac ca mahāpuruṣalakṣaṇāni aśīti ca anuvyañjanāni vyāmaprabhatāṃ cānantaraśmitāṃ ca mahāmaitrī ca mahākaruṇāṃ ca mahāmuditāṃ ca mahopekṣāṃ ca catvāri vaiśāradyāni pratilapsyāmahe, catasraś ca pratisaṃvidah pratilapsyāmahe, aṣṭādaśa ca āveṇikabuddhadharmān pratilapsyāmahe, pañca ca abhijñāḥ, acintyāṃ ca śīlaviśuddhim, acintyāṃ ca samādhiviśuddhim, acintyāṃ ca prajñāviśuddhim, daśa ca tathāgatabalāni pratilapsyāmahe. anuttaraṃ ca buddhajñānam abhisambhotsyāmahe, anuttaraṃ ca dharmaratnaṃ pratilapsyāmahe, yena ca sarvasattvānāṃ saṃvibhāgaṃ kariṣyāma*, “... I (lit. ‘we’, *pluralis maiestatis*) shall become a refuge to all beings. After I have realised unsurpassed full awakening, I shall obtain a golden-coloured body, the thirty-two characteristic marks of a great man, the eighty attributes, the splendour of a halo whose rays extend to the infinitude, great loving kindness, great compassion, great sympathetic joy and great equanimity. I shall obtain the four fearlessnesses, and I shall obtain the four analytical knowledges. I shall obtain the eighteen peculiar qualities of a Buddha. I shall obtain the five supernatural knowledges, an unthinkable purity of morality, an unthinkable

not solely directed at personal liberation but aiming at universal happiness, thus being invested with the full soteriological potential it displays in chapter three.¹¹⁷ The experience

purity of concentration, and unthinkable purity of wisdom, and I shall obtain the ten powers of a Tathāgata. I shall fully awake to the unsurpassed gnosis of a Buddha, and I shall acquire the unsurpassed jewel of the Dharma, which I shall share with all beings”.

- 117 Nattier (2003, 146) remarks that in the *Ugraparipṛcchā*, a reasonably early Mahāyāna discourse, compassion is still not portrayed as a generalised attitude to be cultivated toward all beings, and that the evidence contained in this sūtra rather “suggests that in the early period of development of ideas about the bodhisattva path it may have been primarily *maitrī* that was cultivated, only gradually being eclipsed by the focus on *karuṇā*”. Outside the context of the immeasurables, it becomes often difficult, in Mahāyāna sources, to keep a distinction between loving kindness and compassion, and often in the definition of loving kindness are found qualities similar to those of compassion, see Viévard (2002, 146-150). He notes that, though originally loving kindness has as its object happy beings, and compassion beings who are suffering, “En éliminant progressivement la différence entre les êtres, le bodhisattva ne peut qu’unir *maitrī* et *karuṇā* en un même sentiment d’élân actif vers les autres ... Dans les *apramāṇa*, par la *maitrī*, l’ascète souhaite le bonheur des êtres tout en n’émettant là qu’un vœu pieux. Par la *karuṇā*, il se borne à constater le malheur des êtres. La compassion mahāyāniste unit ces deux aspects. ... Si ces deux vocables se confondent souvent dans le Mahāyāna, c’est que contrairement au véhicule des *śrāvaka*, il ne les conçoit pas séparément” (Viévard 2002, 147-148). Viévard also remarks that from the point of view of terminology, it is remarkable to find associations like *kṛpā-maitrī*, *maitrī/kāruṇya* and *mahāmaitrī-kṛpā*. These expressions “sont l’indice de ce que la notion de compassion, exprimée par d’autres termes que celui de *karuṇā*, sort du cadre étroit des *apramāṇa* même lorsqu’elle est associée à la *maitrī*” (Viévard 2002, 148). Further, Viévard (ibidem) points out that a new use of these terms appears in a new formulation peculiar to the Mahāyāna, in which the practitioner, shining in great loving kindness and great compassion for all beings, meditates that he (or she) may be a protector for all beings and that he (or she) may save all beings from all sufferings: *te cāsya sarvasattvās tayā mahāmaitrī tayā ca mahākaruṇayā sphāritvā manasikṛtā bhavanti: aham eteṣāṃ sarveṣāṃ sattvānāṃ nātho bhaviṣyāmi, ahamenān sarvasattvān sarvaduḥkhebyo mocayisyāmi, Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*, ed. Vaidya (1960, 200), or ed. Wogihara (1973, 793). For other occurrences, see Viévard (2002, 148, 172n). A blending of loving kindness and salvific aspirations is also found in the four loving kindness meditations to be cultivated by bodhisattvas mentioned in the *Bhadramāyākāravāyākaraṇa* 111, ed. Régamey (1990, 45-46): cultivation of loving kindness (*byams pa bsgom pa*, Skt. *maitrībhāvanā*) expressed in the words ‘let me be a refuge of all beings’, cultivation of loving kindness expressed in the words ‘let me lead all beings to deliverance’, cultivation of loving kindness expressed in the words ‘let me remind all beings [their goals], and cultivation of loving kindness expressed in the words ‘let me lead all beings to *parinirvāṇa*’. These examples testify to an engaged and positive salvific attitude, in line with the shift from liberation to soteriology that characterises the Mahāyāna philosophy of religion. On the function of loving kindness in the *Śrāvakabhūmi* of the *Bodhisattvabhūmi*, see Maithrimurthi (1999, 216ff), and Maithrimurthi (1999, 237-240) on the meaning of loving kindness vis-à-vis compassion. For an example of the use of loving kindness and compassion among other epithets of the Tathāgata, see, e.g., *Bhadramāyākāravāyākaraṇa* 3, ed. Régamey (1938 [1990], 20, 19-20): *byams pa chen po dang ni ldan, snying rje chen po dang ni ldan*, “[calling the Buddha] ... endowed with great loving kindness and great compassion”. On the ‘magical’ aspects of *maitrī* see the monograph by Schmithausen (1997). On the meanings of the

of emptiness and not-self provides loving kindness with a new and deeper foundation: great loving kindness is a medicament that removes the cataract of ignorance, the idea of the self, and all false beliefs. Far from being entrapped in the view of substantial existence of selves and beings, it leads to liberating insight into not-self. On this foundation, all beings, the whole cosmos, oneself as well as others, are the recipients of the great loving kindness that knows no distinction between oneself and others. This allows the cognitive purification that leads to see dependent origination, and is at the same time the natural result of the vision of emptiness as dependent arising.

Thus, it could be argued that great loving kindness is born from the realisation of emptiness, and its suffusion is by definition objectless, much as, in the same way, great compassion realises the merging of compassion and emptiness, in that it is objectless compassion born from the vision of emptiness.¹¹⁸ Once correct analysis of the dharmas remains secured by seeing the universal characteristics of experience according to the teachings of the Dharma, there is still scope, and only then full scope, it may be argued, for the arising of great loving kindness, with the apparent philosophical tensions I have highlighted at the beginning of this section being resolved accordingly.¹¹⁹

The impact of this practice in the training of the bodhisattva appears to be fundamental,¹²⁰ so much so that the culmination of the meditative sequence is the obtaining of the prophecy of awakening, *bodhi-vyākaraṇa*. The positioning of the practice of loving kindness as chapter three, almost at the beginning of the *Book of Zambasta*, is especially noteworthy in this respect in that it marks the practical commencement of the bodhisattva path and promises its fulfilment. As I noted above, the fact that the Bodhisattva Maitreya features as the recipient of this instruction points toward his own attainment of Buddhahood by virtue of loving kindness, as the text states it. However, from the doctrinal point of view, that the practice of loving kindness or of any of the other *brahmavihāras* can be in itself sufficient to lead to full awakening is debatable, especially from the perspective of early Buddhism (pace the conclusions reached by Gombrich (1996, 62), as already pointed out by Bodhi (1997, 294), and pace Gombrich (1998, 6ff), as well as Maithrimurthi (1999)).¹²¹ Yet, the salvific potential of compassion and word *maitrī*, see Hara (2009, 21ff).

118 Within a Madhyamaka context, according to the *Pu ti zi liang lun* 菩提資糧論 (*Bodhisambhāraśāstra*), T 1660, 540c7-6 [stanza 161], 正觀於諸法，無我無我所，亦勿捨大悲，及以於大慈，“One who correctly examines all phenomena [sees] that there is no ego and no mine. Still he does not abandon great compassion and great loving kindness”, trans. after Lindtner (1982, 247) with modifications. For a quotation of the *Bodhisambhāra* in the *Book of Zambasta*, see Maggi (2006).

119 The question of the compatibility of great loving kindness and emptiness is also addressed in the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa-sūtra*, after a series of similes used to explain that the bodhisattva’s attitude toward beings should be that of seeing them as illusory, see *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa-sūtra* 6.1, ed. Study Group on Buddhist Sanskrit Literature (2006, 64-66), trans. Lamotte (1976, 153-155).

120 On the abandonment of great loving kindness as the cause for the abandonment of the *bodhicittavajra*, see Wangchuk (2007, 323).

121 See also Maithrimurthi (2004).

loving kindness in the Mahāyāna context of chapter three points to an altogether different construction and exploitation of these qualities not tied into the frame of the *brahmavihāras*.¹²²

Thus a ‘body-based’ contemplation which starts from the four elements and develops according to the notion of the atomic constitution of matter is the basis for loving kindness as a cultivation able to bring wrath and anger (the worst enemies threatening the *bodhicitta* and the successful path of the bodhisattva) to an end, and to bring about the vision of not-self and the cessation of all false discriminations, with the ‘body’ interpreted and employed in a meditation context which is distinctly marked by a Mahāyāna salvific orientation.¹²³ Notwithstanding such Mahāyāna imprinting, it may be noted that the great loving kindness of the bodhisattva engaged in the practice laid out in chapter three does not in and of itself result from realisation of a distinctively Mahāyāna teaching such as emptiness conceived as ‘ontological’ emptiness of all dharmas, but issues directly from realisation of emptiness in terms of not-self.¹²⁴ Thus, to conclude, the question raised in the abstract of this article, what to make of continuity and change in the theory and praxis of meditation displayed by the text under investigation, can be given a typically tetralemmatic answer, which contemplates the possibilities of “yes”, “no”, “both yes and no”, and “neither yes nor no”.

V. Concluding Remarks

An emphasis on the imaginative use of conceptualisation is an innovation that already appears in the practice of loving kindness described, for example, in the Theravāda *Paṭisambhidāmagga*,¹²⁵ or in the chapter on the *brahmavihāras*, *Brahmavihāra-niddesa*, of the *Visuddhimagga* vis-à-

122 On great loving kindness, see also above, 116n.

123 Such a use of the body in Mahāyāna meditation offers a complementary viewpoint to the perspective on use of the body as a means for fulfilling the bodhisattva vow. For textual references on the body as a medium for fulfilling the bodhisattva vow, see Williams (1997, 213-216), and especially Mrozik (2007). On the various Buddhist conceptions of the body, see Bateson (1908), Kajiyama (1972), Hamilton (1995), Trevor (1995), Wilson (1995), Collins (1997), Williams (1997), Onhuma (2006), and Mrozik (2007).

124 In the case of compassion, Siderits (2003, 16) notes that “it is widely held that it is only in Mahāyāna that there first arises the teaching that the enlightened person will naturally seek to help others overcome suffering. This is generally taken to imply that the compassion of the enlightened person must result from realization of that other distinctively Mahāyāna teaching, the emptiness of all dharmas. But the textual evidence does not bear this out. Instead, the texts suggest that compassion issues directly from realization of not self”, and adds that the resulting suggestion that insight into emptiness does not play the central role in awakening for the Mahāyāna schools, including Madhyamaka, is a consequence of a semantic rather metaphysical interpretation of emptiness: on this view, the realization of the emptiness of all dharmas “plays an essentially ancillary role, deepening insights that the aspirant acquires through the realization of not-self”.

125 Paṭis II 130-139.

vis the early Buddhist discourses.¹²⁶ However, the combination of four elements contemplation and loving kindness suffusion, and the specific use of an ‘inwardly directed suffusion’ rather than of an ‘outward radiation’ of loving kindness found in chapter three, seem original developments that I have not been able to trace back to earlier Buddhist literature.

As I have mentioned earlier, in the form of practice of loving kindness meditation as taught by S.N. Goenka, the practitioner intentionally ‘fills’ his or her body particles – that have been ‘purified’ by previous sustained insight practice based on mindfulness directed to sensations (*vedanā*) – with loving-kindness, and thereby in progressive stages suffuses the whole world with such purified experience (with the use, to some degree, of conceptualisations). This practice is to some extent comparable to that of chapter three because the insight developed through intensive meditation practice developed before the undertaking of loving-kindness meditation is precisely based on contemplation of sensations and of the elemental qualities of sensations, just as in the same way the four elements are perceived as purified as a preliminary to the progression of the practice in chapter three. A worth noting similarity is that the atomistic conception of matter at the basis of the meditation technique of chapter three finds a parallel in the Theravāda scholastic notion of *kalāpas* employed in S.N. Goenka’s *vipassanā* instructions in the context of the meditative experience of dissolution of body and mind (which is then followed by the development of loving-kindness meditation). Yet, to the best of my knowledge, ancient texts that technically describe the details of the approach to loving-kindness meditation presented in Goenka’s technique have not yet been explored, and it would be risky to engage in cross-comparisons beyond observing typological and practical similarities.¹²⁷

The practice described in chapter three represents an instance of the formation of a particular type of *samādhi* which does not appear to be attested as such in earlier traditions even though in practice it does not seem to substantially contradict earlier approaches and it even shows some affinities with a form of loving kindness practice taught in a contemporary *vipassanā* tradition. Although building on the earlier (pan-)Buddhist meditative matrix, it certainly testifies to a new development. The innovation lies in the original uses of individual aspects of Buddhist meditation, in the combination of the application of a ‘paradoxical dialectic’ to loving kindness practice and vice versa, in a unique ‘body-based’ loving kindness suffusion, and in the upgrading of loving kindness to great loving kindness free from false discrimination. Above all, it is the ideological framework and spiritual values of the bodhisattva path along with the instrumentality of the practice to the attainment of Buddhahood that constitute the specificity of this Khotanese sūtra on meditation. I would venture to say that in principle the

126 See *Vism* 296ff (IX, 4ff). On the development of the practice of loving kindness in the early discourses, see Anālayo (2003, 196, 57n).

127 On *vipassanā* meditation technique as taught by S.N. Goenka see in general the publications of the Vipassana Research Institute (Igatpuri, India). For a study of its textual antecedents and an appraisal vis-à-vis other traditions of insight meditation, see Anālayo (2006b) and (2011) respectively.

difference is more on the level of representation and overall religious ideology than of actual practice, although the latter is definitely and unavoidably informed by the former.¹²⁸

To conclude, the analysis of the technical and doctrinal aspects of the meditation technique presented in chapter three of the *Book of Zambasta* – from which my investigation began – has suggested a few elements useful to better assess the philological history of the chapter as a *Buddhāvataṃsaka* text vis-à-vis its Chinese parallel, T 306. Then, a closer inspection of the content of the text in the light of the development of Buddhist thought and practice has helped clarify its philosophical background, providing in this way new evidence to trace its so far unexplored doctrinal affiliation or, more precisely, what could be called its container of transmission. With all the due caution in reading discourses (sūtras) such as chapter three against the normative literature of treatises (śāstras) such as the *Bodhisattvabhūmi*¹²⁹ that point to a Yogācāra frame of reference for the doctrinal statements found in chapter three, blended with the *Buddhāvataṃsaka* imagery and literary symbolism of the discourse, all in all these findings highlight the potential of the study of meditation texts for the reconstruction of the development of Mahāyāna.¹³⁰

128 On the practical points of convergence and the spiritual divergences between the meditative practices of śrāvakas and those of bodhisattvas as represented in the meditation manual compiled and translated by Kumārajīva, *Zuo chan san mei jing* 坐禪三昧經 (T 614), and the manual on the so-called five gates, *Wu men chan yao fa* 五門禪要法 (T 619), allegedly translated by Dharmamitra, the so-called Dharmatrāta manual translated by Buddhahadra, *Damoduoluo chan jing* 達摩多羅禪經 (T 618), all works slightly earlier or contemporary to the *Book of Zambasta*, see Yamabe (2009, 55ff). A study of contemplation of the corpse as evidenced by fifth-century Chinese meditation manuals is found in Greene (2006). An interesting avenue for future investigation of the way traditional meditative practices are found within Mahāyāna works is represented by a closer inspection of the practice on the impure, contemplation of the corpse etc. as presented in chaps. seventeen to twenty-one of the *Book of Zambasta*. On these chaps, see the section on “Chapter Three and the Other Meditation Chapter in the *Book of Zambasta*”.

129 The chapter on the immeasurable of the **Bodhisattvapiṭaka-sūtra*, extant in Chinese (T 310, 12 and T 316) and Tibetan (Peking/Ötani 760.12, Derge/Tōhoku 56), also presents the practice of loving kindness and the other three immeasurables according to the three modes of reference of *sattvālabana*, *dharmālabana* and *anālabana*, see Pagel (1995, 140ff).

130 The considerations made by Harrison (2003, 118-120) on the importance of the study of meditation texts for the reconstruction of the development of Mahāyāna with regard to Mahāyāna meditative texts in Chinese could be likewise applied to the case of chapter three: “The Mahāyāna sūtras translated into Chinese from the late 2nd century onwards ... show us that Buddhism had already evolved by that date a wealth of new religious ideas and ritual practices, including a diverse repertoire of meditation techniques. These took place alongside traditional Mainstream Buddhism (or Śrāvakayāna) meditation practices, in which the followers of the new way continued to engage. By these older practices I mean such things as the *smṛtyupasthānas*, the *dhyanas*, the *anusmṛtis*, and the *brahma-vihāras*. All these are mentioned frequently in our sources as basic elements of the Buddhist path for renunciants. They are an obvious part of the extensive Mainstream foundation on which Mahāyāna Buddhism is built. What is less obvious, though, is how a practical meditative path comprising these techniques underlies many

Looking back at the discussion of the Yogācāra background to chapter three of the *Book of Zambasta* I presented in the last part of this article, historically the placement of this Mahāyāna discourse within the inheritance of the Sarvāstivāda meditation masters known as the yogācāras (and one naturally thinks of the Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma masters as well, who provided the doctrinal foundation to the meditation scriptures circulating in Central Asia that were translated into Chinese between the fourth and the sixth centuries), is to some extent supported by the presence of other elements found in the *Book of Zambasta* that were particularly relevant in works transmitted within the Sarvāstivāda textual tradition.¹³¹ Dark and grey areas in our historical and doctrinal understanding of Khotanese Buddhism are still very large. Clearly, however, the community who transmitted chapter three was intent on treading the bodhisattva path in pursuit of the Mahāyāna goal of the attainment of Buddhahood, with the help of an adequately adapted meditation technique.

of the apparently philosophical or doctrinal innovations of early Mahāyāna sources; or how the wording of the earlier *Āgamas* or *Nikāyas* propounding these techniques provides a basis for these innovations, even if that basis is in fact subverted. These two underpinnings are not in fact separate, since ... we need always to be mindful of the constant interplay between practice and text. ... it is commonplace to say that the early Mahāyānists reacted against and rejected the supposed excesses of the Ābhidharmikas, but my own reading suggests that they were building on and pushing further earlier meditative traditions, like the *smṛtyupasthānas*, which incorporated the Abhidharmic approach. They took up the same practice, but instead of simply following the existing script, they also modified and subverted it in a creative fashion, and one sees this not only in their expositions of the *smṛtyupasthānas* proper, but in many other contexts as well”.

- 131 One example may be the *brahmapuṇya* formula, see note 83, which however merits a separate treatment that goes well beyond the scope of the present article. Another is the “*vajra*-like [meditative] control” (*vajrropamu rrāśu*, mentioned at Z 10.33). Leumann (1933-1936, 131) rendered the phrase as “Vajrôpama-(samādhi)rāja” and referred to the relevant *Mahāvvyutpatti* entry, see *Mahāvvyutpatti* 516, ed. Sakaki (1925/1962, 41); whereas Emmerick (1968, 151) rendered it as “the *vajropāma*-experience”, probably on the basis of the etymology of the verbs *rrās-* “to rule” (denominative from *rrāśa-*, on which, see Degener (1989, 299 s.v. *rrāśa-*): “1) ‘Herrschaft, Macht’, 2) ‘Sphäre, Reich’, 3) *rrāśa yan-* ‘entlassen’”). Though this expression is already found in the early stratum of Buddhist literature (AN 3:25 at ANI 124, 2ff, *vajirūpamacitto*; Pug 30, 20, *vajirupamacitta*; Dhs 1299 at Dhs 225-226, *katame dhammā vajirūpamā?*; EĀ 48.6 at T II 793b21, “*vajra*-concentration”, 金剛三昧, as well as in various Mahāyāna texts (for references, see Watanabe (2005a and 2005b) and Pagel (2007, 15, 17n), it is classified as a crucial attainment especially in the Sarvāstivāda scholastic mapping of the path, indicating the complete cutting off of defilements, see e.g., *Abhidharmakośa* 6.44d, ed. Pradhan (1967, 364). See references and discussion in Frauwallner (1995, 177ff), and Seyfort-Ruegg (1989, 176, 336n and 176ff). One more example is the presence in the *Book of Zambasta* of polemical statements against brahmanical epical literature that consistently occur also within a small group of texts linked to the Sarvāstivāda tradition, which can be broadly dated to the fourth century AD, and can be traced back to North-Western India, on which, see Martini (2011 forthcoming).

Abbreviations

AN	<i>Anguttara-nikāya</i>
Dhs	<i>Dhammasaṅgaṇī</i>
DN	<i>Dīgha-nikāya</i>
EĀ	<i>Ekottarika-āgama</i> (T 125)
Kv	<i>Kathāvatthu</i>
Kv-a	<i>Kathāvatthu-aṭṭhakathā</i>
MN	<i>Majjhima-nikāya</i>
Paṭis	<i>Paṭisambhidhāmagga</i>
Pug	<i>Puggalapaññatti</i>
Sn	<i>Suttanipāta</i>
SN	<i>Saṃyutta-nikāya</i>
T	Taishō Tripiṭaka (ed. CBETA, 2009)
Vibh	<i>Vibhaṅga</i>
Vism	<i>Visuddhimagga</i>
Z	<i>Book of Zambasta</i> (ed. Emmerick, 1968)

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