

# 孙昌武

教授八十华诞纪念文集

宁稼雨 肖占鹏 湛如 普慧 张培锋◎编

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## 作者名录

(按照作者姓名笔画排序)

- 小南一郎:日本京都大学名誉 教授  
 王志鹏:敦煌研究院 研究员  
 王晓平:天津师范大学文学院 教授  
 王基伦:台湾师范大学国文学系 教授  
 户岐哲彦:日本岛根大学法文学部 教授  
 宁稼雨:南开大学文学院 教授  
 安东平(Christoph Anderl):比利时根特大学 教授  
 刘卫林:香港城市大学 教授  
 刘建辉:日本国际日本文化研究中心 教授  
 刘俐俐:南开大学文学院 教授  
 严寅春:西藏民族大学文学院 副教授  
 李小荣:福建师范大学文学院 教授  
 李凤银:天津中德职业技术学院 副教授  
 李建昆:台湾东海大学中文系 教授  
 张胜珍:天津财经大学中文系 副教授  
 张培锋:南开大学文学院 教授  
 张总:中国社会科学院世界宗教研究所 研究员  
 陈国学:云南民族大学文传学院 副教授  
 林疏影:福建省民族宗教厅  
 范军:泰国华侨崇圣大学中国语言文化学院 教授  
 尚丽新:山西大学文学院 副教授

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其实,南宋刊《诂训本》至少亦有二种。天禄琳琅旧藏本称《新刊诂训唐柳先生文集》者非韩醇原编,为蜀中书坊所修。以韩注为主而从略,增以孙汝听、祝充等他注,又附加篇章,刊于淳熙四年(1177)以后,疑在嘉定十三年(1220)至淳祐九年(1249)之间。

《诂训本》研究尚未就绪,刍议存疑仍不少,如《新刊诂训本》正集有一条“孙曰”,《新编外集》有一条“童曰”,容再深究。《百家注本》等以及《音辨本》俱属北宋沈晦四十五卷本系统,而编次、正文互有所异,盖南宋时已分成三四种,《诂训本》乃其中之一。又《诂训本》逐篇考年代,视文安礼《年谱》翔实,足以编为“年谱”或“系年集注”本,富有文献价值,惜束之高阁至今。我们应该使用荟要本及其四库底本,使得柳宗元研究更进一步推展深入。

## Miscellaneous Informal Remarks on Narrative Structures in Chinese Maitreya Accounts

Christoph Anderl

I dedicate this paper to Prof. Sūn Chāngwǔ on the occasion of his 80th birthday. Since we met for the first time in 2001, he has been of great inspiration to me, both as a dear friend and as an accomplished scholar.

### Introduction

In this article I will mainly focus on early material on Maitreya, based on a small selection of sources. Although many of the sūtra texts mentioned below can be dated to the Eastern Jīn period (317–420), the important question of text production and distribution during this early period (i.e., which texts were available during what time and at which locations, where and how did they originate) will not be dealt with (and also might be difficult to reconstruct in some cases). Generally, materials concerning Maitreya narratives include canonical scriptures, compilations and texts produced in China (often referred to as “apocryphals”), commentaries and essays on Maitreya,<sup>①</sup> inscriptions on statues

① “Messianic” texts (see for example Zürcher 1982) and commentary literature on Maitreya will be excluded from the (very limited) scope of this study. The important information included in historiographical/biographical material on actual Maitreya cults and practices will not be considered, as well.

and steles. Although iconographic material (on which I superficially will touch upon in the first section of the paper) includes large numbers of statues (in addition to some early wall paintings), I have focused on a consistent set of statues from the 6th century discovered in the same region, and all of them containing detailed inscription texts.

### Maitreya statues: A miniature case study on “inscription narratives”

During the last thirty years, large numbers of dedicatory statues have been unearthed in China, especially in the Héběi and Shāndōng provinces, most of them dating from the Northern Wèi (北魏, 386–535) and Northern Qí (北齐, 550–577) periods. The findings show that small dedicatory statues of śākyamuni Buddha, Avalokiteśvara and Maitreya were most popular during that time and were produced in large numbers. ① Fortunately, most statues contain inscriptions and provide detailed information on the circumstances of their production and functions during the prime time of Maitreya cult in China.

#### The Maitreya statues in the ōuyáng area of Héběi Province

Recently, I had the opportunity to visit a non-public depository of White Stone statues with dedicatory inscriptions stored in the Forbidden City. Although originating in the same area, they show significant differences concerning their iconographic features; as such, they exemplify the evolution of the Maitreya motif in a specific area. All statues contain inscriptions, including detailed references to the time and location of their production. Below, I will provide an overview of these descriptions, their structure, contents, and references to Maitreya.

① For recent publications, see Féng 2005, Zhāng 2009, and Zhāng & Xiào 2011. The Forbidden City houses a small non-public depository, containing numerous exquisite statues made of white stone (báishí 白石) from the Qūyáng 曲阳 district in Héběi. Among them are also twelve Maitreya statues dating from between 520 and 585.

Statues	Maitreya	Unspecified Bodhisattvas	Avalokiteśvara	(śākyamuni) Buddha	“Contemplation Statues” 思惟像	Amitabha
北魏	5	1	5	3	0	0
东魏	2	11	14	10	9	0
北齐	5	94	35	20	37	8
Total	12	106	54	33	46	8

Table: Number of dedicatory statues excavated in the Qūyáng area. Note that all statues have more or less detailed inscriptions (the count is based on the reproduction of the inscriptions in Féng 2005: 143–257).

The information provided in the inscriptions is as follows (with some variations):

- Date
- Place
- Name of the donor(s)
- Fabrication of the statue (typically: 造弥勒像一躯)
- Recipient
- Wish and/or vow

no. ①	donor	statue	beneficiary	wish/vow	comments / translation
1 520	26 “practitioners,” clergy and lay people	造弥勒像一躯 Manufacture one Maitreya statue	上为皇家下为边地众生 Above, for the family of the emperor; below, for the sentient beings of the border regions. ②	普同此愿	The actual wish is not stated; the names of all 26 persons are listed in the inscription

① The numbers above refer to the inscription numbers in Féng 2005: 143–257 (there, see also the names of the donors, dates and places of the inscriptions). The numbers below are the dates of the inscriptions.

② 边地 usually refers to a non-central border region; however, here it might be used as a modest reference to the local area (i.e., defined as “outlying” compared to the “central regions” where a Buddha is born).

donor	statue	beneficiary	wish/vow	comments / translation
26 "practitioners," clergy and lay people	造弥勒像一躯 Manufacture one Maitreya statue	上为皇家下为边地众生 Above, for the family of the emperor; below, for the sentient beings of the border regions. <sup>②</sup>	普同此愿	The actual wish is not stated; the names of all 26 persons are listed in the inscription
Lay person	造弥勒像一躯 Manufacture one Maitreya statue	上为皇帝下为一切含生之类后为七世先亡见(=现)存男女眷属 Above, for the Emperor; below, for all sentient beings; and for seven generations of ancestors, and the male and female family members alive.	愿托生天宫一时成佛 Wishing to be born in the heavenly palace [of tuṣita], and may we complete buddhahood at the same time (i.e., together)	
Lay person	造弥勒上生像一躯 Manufacture one Maitreya statue born above	为父母 For father and mother.	[No concrete wish is stated]	The statue is specified as Maitreya born above (in Tuṣita Heaven)
Lay person	造弥勒像一躯 Manufacture one Maitreya statue	为亡父见(=现)存母兄既身合家养属 For the deceased father and the mother alive, the elder brother, and all family members and relatives.	愿生生直佛拔延侍佛 Wishing to encounter Buddha life after life and be reincarnated in order to serve the [Maitreya] Buddha	
Several lay	造弥勒像一躯	上为皇帝下为受苦苍生见在邑义 Above, for the emperor;	同生净国在佛文(=闻)法口德法愿愿成佛所求如意; [Wishing] to be born together in a Pure Land and listen to the dharma	

528	persons	Manufacture one Maitreya statue	below, for the sentient beings being subjected to suffering, [and those] living in [the city of] Yiyi.	in the presence of Buddha, [...] virtuous dharma; wishing to complete Buddhahood, and may [everything] one wishes for be granted.	
17 538	Lay person	造弥勒像一躯 Manufacture one Maitreya statue	上为国主延祚有为边地一切众生 Above, to extend the fortune of the ruler of the country; and for all the "border land's" sentient beings.	具时成佛 [Wishing] to complete Buddhahood at the same time.	
29 541	Lay person	造弥勒像一躯 Manufacture one Maitreya statue	上为国家后为七世父母居眷大小亡过现存边地众生一时成佛 Above, for the family of the country (i.e., the ruler), and by extension for the fathers and mothers of the seven [past] generations, for the relatives and all deceased and living sentient beings of the border region, old and young.	一时成佛 [Wishing] to complete Buddhahood at the same time.一时成佛 [Wishing] to complete Buddhahood at the same time.	
69	Lay person	造弥勒下生像一躯举高尺八 Manufacture one Maitreya statue	愿使亡夫... Wishing to cause the	...舍秽托生得妙净果并及眷属居得常乐 ...to get rid of impurities and be reborn to attain the wonderful pure fruit [of Buddhahood]; and	Here the image is defined as representing "birth [in the world] below,"



1		born below with a height of one chǐ eight [cún] (ca. 40 cm)	deceased husband...	may all relatives attain eternal bliss.	i.e. Maitreya after his last rebirth in Jambudvīpa
6	Lay person	造弥勒像 Manufacture one Maitreya statue	为家人 For the members of the family.	亡者上天 [Wishing] that the deceased may ascend to heaven.	
1 50	"people of the city"	造弥勒下生像一躯 Manufacture one Maitreya statue born below	为皇帝陛下师僧父母法界有形 For the sake of the emperor, and below for master, monks, father, mother, and [all] that which has form in the Dharma-world.	一时成佛 [Wishing] to complete Buddhahood at the same time.	
1 53	Monk	造弥勒下生玉象一躯 Manufacture one Maitreya jade statue [of Maitreya] born below [in Jambudvīpa]	愿使亡者见存 Wishing to cause the deceased and living...	同获佛果 ...to harvest the fruit of Buddhahood together.	
	Lay person	造弥勒像一躯 Manufacture one Maitreya statue		张波为息 [May] Zhāngbō rest [in peace]	

Although this is only a small sample of inscriptions, they still provide us with important information on the use of dedicatory inscriptions at a specific location throughout an extended period. First of all it may be noted that during the Northern Wèi period the number of Maitreya statues is higher than those of other deities, and that small dedicatory Amitabha images were not

produced yet in that region. During the later period, Maitreya inscriptions become exceedingly rare in relation to the other inscriptions. By the time of the Northern Qi, inscriptions to unspecified bodhisattvas and Avalokiteśvara were the most popular, in addition to the "Contemplation Statues" (思惟像). Concerning the last type of statue, it not quite clear which figure is depicted in the state of meditation. Most likely they show śākyamuni sitting in meditation before his enlightenment, however, theoretically, it may refer to any meditating bodhisattva or buddha, including Maitreya. As a matter of fact, inscriptions specifying Maitreya had become very rare. On the other hand, during the Northern Qi Amitabha inscriptions appear for the first time in this area.

The inscriptions also provide us with additional interesting information, and the following aspects can be observed:

- Nearly all inscriptions refer to the ruler as main recipient of the dedication.
- Nearly always, the parents and other family members are referred to.
- Occasionally, the more general population of the area, or even all sentient beings are included in the dedication.
- The dedication is conferred to both dead and living family members.
- The most common wish concerns the simultaneous attainment of Buddhahood.
- Other items include the encounter with Buddha and the rebirth in a Pure Land.
- Very rarely, direct references are made to Maitreya in the wish, i. e. "to be born in the Heavenly Palace [of Tuṣita]" or "to ascend to the Heaven [of Tuṣita]."
- Only once, a very personal wish is inscribed ("may that one wish-

es for be granted”).

After a rough comparison with the inscriptions involving the commissioning of statues of the other deities, it can be also concluded that the inscription narratives are rather *non-specific*, i.e., there is not an obvious relation between the *type* of statue produced and the *contents* of the inscriptions (i.e., dedication and wish) attached to it.<sup>①</sup> All in all, the link between the identity of the iconographic item and the content of the textual inscription is relatively weak.

### “Sūtra” material on Maitreya

Several scriptures had a significant impact on the promotion of Maitreya as the future Buddha, such as Zhú Fǎhù's 竺法护 *Mìlè xiàshēng jīng* 弥勒下生经, Kumārajīva's *Mìlè chéngfó jīng* 弥勒成佛经, and the Fóshuō *púsà shàngshēng dōushuài-tiān jīng* 佛说观弥勒菩萨上生兜率天经. All the texts focus on aspects of the spiritual career of Maitreya. Besides these texts predominantly dealing Maitreya, the sage also plays an important role in many other scriptures (for a short overview, see below).<sup>②</sup>

#### The “Maitreya sūtras”

The *Mìlè Púsà Suǒwèn Běnyuàn Jīng* 弥勒菩萨所问本愿经

The translation of this text (T.12, no.349) is traditionally attributed to

① However, it can be observed that none of the Maitreya statue inscriptions include the wish to attain enlightenment, frequently encountered in those attached to śākyamuni statues and “Contemplation” statues.

② Among the “Maitreya sūtras,” some later products will not be considered here, such as the Fóshuō *Mìlè xiàshēng chéngfó jīng* 佛说弥勒下生成佛经 (T.455, Táng Dynasty), the *Mìlè púsà suǒwèn jīng* 弥勒菩萨所问经 (T.26, no.1525, Táng Dynasty, early 8th c.), and the *Mǐjīn púsà wèn bāfāhuì jīng* 弥勒菩萨问八法会 (T.11, no.310, fascicle 41, Táng Dynasty, early 8th c.). According to the Táng Dynasty sūtra catalogues there were many more scriptures on Maitreya which are not extant anymore; e.g., the *Mìlè púsà wéi nǚ jīng* 弥勒菩萨为女经 and the *Mìlè púsà běnyuàn dàishí chéngfó jīng* 弥勒菩萨本愿待时成佛经.

Dharmarakṣa of the Western Jin, and is considered as one of the major Maitreya texts. In the typical style of a sūtra, the initial part is devoted to the description of the sermon's audience, consisting of attending monks, sages, bodhisattvas, supernatural beings, etc. Maitreya initiates the sermon of Buddha by posing a question. The discussion revolves around the right practice. Indeed, Maitreya claims to perform a single practice:

菩萨有几法行。皆弃诸恶道不随恶知识中。(186a4-5)

The Bodhisattva has a single Dharma practice: To abandon all evil ways and not to follow evil teachers.<sup>①</sup>

As a special feature of the text, the Buddha gradually expands this single teaching into ten kinds of practices which are thoroughly explained. Finally, Maitreya rejoices and recites a gāthā of praise. After that, Ānanda enters the stage and praises the skills of Maitreya; the Buddha, again, praises this praise:

佛言。如是如是。阿难。如其所云。弥勒菩萨辩才具足。所说经法无所缺减。佛言阿难。弥勒菩萨不独以偈赞我。乃往过十无央数劫。(187c24-26)

The Buddha: “Thus it is, thus it is, Ānanda! As for the way he was citing [the praise], Maitreya Bodhisattvas rhetorical skills are indeed perfected. His way of expounding the sūtras does not have any shortcomings.” The Buddha told Ānanda: “Maitreya Bodhisattva is not the only one who praised me with a gāthā. In the past ages, for incalculably long kalpas [I was also praised by him].”

The Buddha thereupon recounts virtuous deeds of Maitreya in a previous

① If not otherwise indicated, the tentative translations are mine.



incarnation, when he also praised the Buddha, and identifies the protagonist with Maitreya (欲知尔时长者子梵志贤行者。今弥勒菩萨是; 188a27). In the subsequent passage, Buddha discusses skillful means (shànquán 善权) by which Maitreya causes sentient beings to gain enlightenment.

The *Fóshuō Guān Míle Púsà Shàngshēng Dōushuāi-tiān*  
佛说观弥勒菩萨上生兜率天经

This is one of the most influential texts (T.14, no.452) on Maitreya, supposedly translated by Jǔqú Jīngshēng 沮渠京声 (a cousin of the Northern Liáng ruler) who is also mentioned as author of another “Contemplation Sūtra,” the *Guānshìyīn guānjīng* 观世音观经 (Contemplation Sūtra on Avalokiteśvara, not extant). The origin of the scripture is still a matter of ardent discussions among scholars and is often connected to the Khotan and Turfan regions. This would make sense insofar this area is more generally regarded as one of the sources and “import areas” of Maitreya cult to China. In addition to this connection to the Northwestern area, this text—the Chinese version of which probably originated during the early 5th century—as well as other Contemplation Sūtras, show distinct features of being compiled in China, and there are no Indic parallel texts.<sup>①</sup>

From a structural point of view, the text shows interesting features. The most striking characteristic is the contrast between the descriptions of Maitreya as part of an assembly and the subsequent detailed description of Maitreya's abode in Tuṣita Heaven (Dōushuāi-tiān 兜率天). Indeed, after the opening part, Maitreya is described as a rather regular person by Buddha's disciple Upāli. In his reply, Buddha does not provide any information whatsoever why exactly Maitreya—among countless other bodhisattvas or major

① The question of origin cannot be pursued in detail here. However, as Greene points out, these texts were a major inspiration for establishing meditation practices in China. For a discussion on the origin of the texts, see Greene 2012: 133f; see also Mai 2009: 166. There is also a popularized commentary on this scripture among the Dūnhuáng manuscripts, P.3093 by the title of *Fóshuō Guān Míle Púsà Shàngshēng Dōushuāi-tiān jīng jiǎngjīngwén* 佛说观弥勒菩萨上兜率天经讲经文。

followers—should be singled out to be reborn amidst the grandeur of the palaces of this heaven, waiting for his time to become a Buddha. Addressing the World-honoured One, the sage Upāli (优波离) refers to Maitreya in the following way:

世尊。世尊往昔于毘尼中及诸经藏说阿逸多次当作佛。此阿逸多具凡夫身未断诸漏。此人命终当生何处。其人今者虽复出家。不修禅定不断烦恼。佛记此人成佛无疑。此人命终生何国土。(T.14, no.452: 418c5-9)

World-honoured One! In former times, the World-honoured One has proclaimed in the Vinaya and the Sūtra repository that the Inconvincible One (阿逸多, Skt. Ajita, i.e., Maitreya) is equipped with the body of a commoner and has not yet cut off all impurities. After his life has come to an end, at which place will this person be(re)born? Although this person has now again renounced home, he does not practice meditative concentration (禅定), nor has he cut off the defilements. The Buddha has predicted that this person will become a Buddha, without doubt. In which country will this person be reborn after the end of his life?

Buddha by no means objects this rather negative description of Maitreya, but rather takes the question as occasion to initiate his sermon on Tuṣita Heaven, and eventually gives the following prediction:

今于此众说弥勒菩萨摩訶萨阿耨多罗三藐三菩提记。此人从今十二年后命终。必得往生兜率陀天上。(ibid.: 418c12-13)

Now, in this assembly, I proclaim the prophecy of the complete enlightenment (anuttarā-samyak-sambodhi) of Maitreya Bodhisattva Mahāsattva. Twelve years from now, the life of this person will come to an end, and he is bound to be reborn in Tuṣita Heaven.

The contrast between the description of the “common person” Maitreya in Buddha’s assembly and his projected future is great, indeed. Without providing a detailed description of the text, it will suffice to give a short account of its overall build-up. Maitreya himself does not play a significant role in the text. Rather, he is passively affected by the events predicted by the Buddha, and the focal point of the narrative is the description of Tuṣita Heaven and the instructions to the assembly on how to achieve rebirth there.

*Initial section:* Detailed description of the setting of the sermon (Jetavana Park near śrāvastī) and the display of supernatural powers by the Buddha through which countless “Transformation Buddhas”(化佛) appear, each accompanied by their grand assemblies. Chanting dhāraṇīs, the arhat Upāli initiates the sermon by his question (see above).

*Section Two:* Introduced by the prediction about the future of Maitreya, the Buddha gives an account on how the gods and other beings will create an abode of palaces in Tuṣita Heaven, adorned with unimaginable treasures which are described in detail. The account also includes references to the heavenly “population” in this abode. There is also an emphasis on the female inhabitants, the Heavenly Maidens (the reader is also informed that these maidens are promised as servants to those achieving rebirth in this heaven! 若有往生兜率天上自然得此天女侍御 *ibid.*: 419a29–b1). Singled out are also “five great spirits”(五大神) and their magical skills in adorning the abode. The emphasis is on the beautiful and inconceivable particularities of the location, and only sporadically, short references to “Buddhist activities” (employing rather mechanically standard sets of Buddhist doctrines) in the Heaven are interspersed.

*Part Three:* In this part, the magnificent world of Tuṣita is connected with the needs of the earthly believers. In order to become the disciple of Maitreya, the adherent has to engage in the practice of the “correct contemplation,” i.e., the visualization of Tuṣita Heaven, combined with following the basic Buddhist

tenets such as keeping the Five Prohibitions, etc.

作是观者名为正观。若他观者名为邪观。(419c10)

Engaging in this visualization is referred to as “correct visualization.” If one performs another contemplation, this is referred to as “wrong (heterodox) visualization.”

*Section Four* deals with the ascent of Maitreya to Tuṣita Heaven and his enthronement there. His special features and accompanying supernatural occurrences are described, causing countless gods to direct themselves to the attainment of perfect enlightenment.

*Section Five* describes the descent of Maitreya from Tuṣita Heaven (after an exceedingly long time of dwelling there, i.e.,  $56 \times 100.000.000 \times 10.000$  years) to Jambudvīpa.

*Section Six* deals with the preconditions for sentient being to be born in Tuṣita Heaven (for example, the practice of visualizing Maitreya statues and chanting his name, keeping the precepts, observing the periods of fasting, etc.), and the simultaneous descent with him to Jambudvīpa.

In *Section Seven* śākyamuni addresses his disciple Upāli and states that all accumulated sins can be extinguished through repentance. Based on this practice rebirth in Tuṣita Heaven will be possible. After the Buddha’s death it is essential for all his devotees to follow the right visualization/contemplation practices in order to achieve rebirth in Tuṣita Heaven, as well as to perform devotional practices concerning Maitreya. As the main effect of the practices, all sins will be extinguished and rebirth in Tuṣita is guaranteed.

In the last section the listeners of the sermon rejoice and circumambulate Buddha and Maitreya Bodhisattva. Ānanda asks for the name of the sermon and Buddha provides the names of the sūtra. The text concludes with a description of the praise of the attending assemblies.

The *Fóshuō Mílè Xiàshēng Chéngfó Jīng* 佛说弥勒下生成佛经

This text is attributed to Kumārajīva (in addition to two other texts on Maitreya, the *Fóshuō Mílè xiàshēng dàchéngfó jīng* 佛说弥勒下生大成佛经, no.456, early 5th c., and the *Mílè púsà běnyuàn dàishí chéngfó jīng* 弥勒菩萨本愿待时成佛经, not extant). I will briefly deal with this text (although other scholars have done this previously in greater detail and in more depth), in order to sort out a few of the narrative strategies pursued in it. It appears to me that this is the most consistent narrative on Maitreya, trying to embed the figure in a "biographical" narrative sequence (a kind of Maitreya *nidāna*). In addition, I also consider it as the most entertaining narrative on Maitreya.

The sūtra is initiated by a question of Śāriputra to Śākyamuni concerning the future descend of Maitreya in order to become a Buddha. Buddha starts his response with a description of Jambudvīpa (阎浮提地), a sort of perfect world in which human beings become 84,000 years old (and women are married at the age of 500 years). The only minor three shortcomings in this world is the necessity to urinate/defecate, eat, and become old (一者便利。二者饮食。三者衰老; T.14, no.454: 423c19-20).<sup>①</sup> The Buddha describes the grandeur of the capital city, its beauty of nature, and the high moral standards of its inhabitants. The population is at peace and is ruled by a virtuous king by the name of King Śaṅkha (蟻佉). He is in the possession of a powerful army, great treasures, and has one thousand children. The text continues with a description of the four great depositories of the king's treasures (四大藏). The treasures do not need to be guarded because the people do not have a craving mind. In this ideal environment Maitreya is born into a Brahmin family of Subrahmaṇa (妙梵) and Brahmāvātī (梵摩波提), equipped with the

① Several passages of the text emphasize the cleanliness of the abode. In of them an elegant solution to the toilet problem is described: "In the case of defecation, the earth would split open and receive [the waste]. After having received it, [the earth] would close itself again. Red lotus flowers would grow in order to cover over the smell of the filth." (设有便利地裂受之受已还合。生赤莲花以蔽秽气; 429b23).

marks of a great person. The following passage is constructed in the form of a very concise account of Buddha's life:<sup>①</sup>

- Birth
- Special bodily features
- Generating the feeling of compassion with the sentient beings<sup>②</sup>
- Discontent with living together with his family
  - ◇ The presentation of a jeweled tower (宝台) to Maitreya; Maitreya does not want it and passes it on to the Brahmins who break it and divide the pieces among themselves; this event causes the realization of impermanence of all dharmas (弥勒菩萨见此妙台须臾无常知一切法皆亦磨灭).
- Practice of the thought of impermanence and renouncing home (修无常想出家学道)
  - ◇ Meditation under the "Dragon Flower Bodhi Tree" (坐于龙华菩提树下). And here, something remarkable: On the very same day when he renounced home, he attained anuttarā-samyak-saṃbodhi (即以出家日得阿耨多罗三藐三菩提)
- Veneration of gods, nāgas, etc.

The next part of the narrative is concerned with the immediate effect of the event of enlightenment. After the manifestation of his supernatural Buddha-

① The increased indent marks passages which show major diversions from the build-up of śākyamuni's biography in terms of contents and/or structure.

② Here one can sense a certain contradiction to the previous account of the "perfect world" of Jambudvīpa and one could ask why Maitreya has to be born in a much better world than the one being narrated in the *nidānas* of the Buddha. As a structural parallel to śākyamuni's life story, the text states that Maitreya observes/contemplates (观) that "the worldly five desires lead to disaster, and how utterly pitiful it is that a great many living beings are submerged in the cycle of life and death (弥勒菩萨观世五欲致患甚多众生沉没在大生死甚可怜悯; 424b20). This does not quite conform with the description of the population as being free from craving and only having three minor shortcomings (病, see above).

body (and without the use of teaching activities!) the population resorts to the vow of entering the path to enlightenment:

尔时人民各作是念。虽复千万亿岁受五欲乐。不能得免三恶道苦。妻子财产所不能救。世间无常命难久保。我等今者宜于佛法修行梵行。作是念已出家学道(424c2-5)

At that time, each one among the population produced the following thought: "Although we have perceived the five desires and pleasures for innumerable years, we were not able to escape the suffering of the three evil paths. Wife, children, and riches we were unable to search for. The world is impermanent and life is difficult to preserve for long. Now, we find suitability in the Buddha-dharma and cultivate the pure practices (brahmacārin)." After they had produced this thought they renounced home and studied the Way.

After that, the narrative turns to specific protagonists; together with his ministers, Brahmins, wise men, etc., Subrahmaṇa renounces home. At this point, another figure is introduced, namely Sudhana(须达那), identified as Elder Sudat [ta] (须达长者), alias Anāthapiṇḍada, a disciple of Śākyamuni known for his generosity and practice of dāna.<sup>①</sup> He likewise took refuge in the new Buddha, together with numerous followers. Other specific persons are mentioned, such as the brothers Ṛṣidatta (梨师达多) and Purāṇa (富兰那), two officials by the names of Candana ("Sandalwood") and Suma[nas] (须曼 "Jasmine Flower"), followed by several more "identifications" in the style of jātaka. The king's daughter 舍弥婆帝 is identified as today's Visākhā (毘舍佉, a generous female lay supporter of Śākyamuni's community); the crown prince of the king, 天色 (Devarūpa) is identified as today's 提婆娑那;

① The identification uses a formula usually found in *jātaka* literature: 复有 X 今是 "There will be person X who is the very person Y of today" (using *shì* 是 as a postposed affirmative copula).

Sumati (须摩提) is identified as 鬱多罗 (Uttara).

The specificity of protagonists reinforces the impression of a biographical account, and the identifications bridge the gap between the future Buddha and well-known figures appearing in the texts of the "present age," generating the feeling of familiarity with the events. As Mai (2009:162) has observed, several of these names appear in the Divyāvadāna account of Maitreya's descent.

These overwhelming auto-conversion activities of the whole population is commented on by Maitreya in the following way:

尔时弥勒佛见诸大众作是念言。今诸人等不以生天乐故。亦复不为今世乐故。来至我所。但为涅槃常乐因缘。是诸人等皆于佛法中种诸善根。释迦牟尼佛遣来付我。是故今者皆至我所。我今受之。

At that time, Maitreya Buddha saw the great assemblies and produced the following thought: "Now, all the people arrive here not because of the joy of being born in Heaven, nor because of the joys of today's world; but because of the eternal joy of Nirvana. All these people have fostered their wholesome seeds in the Buddha-dharma. In former times Śākyamuni has entrusted them (i.e., these people) to me; therefore, they now all come to this place and I receive them herewith."

What follows is a long list of merits based on the cultivation of which (during the time of Śākyamuni Buddha) the people have ultimately arrived at the place of Maitreya, and a praise of Śākyamuni's skills to show them the right way. As such, a direct link between the age of Śākyamuni Buddha (the "cause") and the age of Maitreya (the "result") is established.

In the next part there is a description of the three great assemblies during which Maitreya taught the Dharma; expounding the Dharma at the initial assembly, the second great assembly, and the third great assembly, during which innumerable people attained arhatship.



### “Non-specific” Maitreya texts<sup>①</sup>

The *Zhōng Āhán Jīng* 中阿含经

One of the earliest references to Maitreya in “canonical” Buddhist literature in China can be found in the *Zhōng āhán jīng* (Madhyamagama; T.1, no. 26), translated by Gautama Saṃghadeva(瞿曇僧伽提婆) between 397 and 398 during the Eastern Jin. Ample References to Maitreya can be also found in the *Zēngyī āhán jīng* 增一阿含经 (*Ekottaragama*; tr. by Gautama Saṃghadeva in 397; T.2, no.125) and the *Cháng āhán jīng* 长阿含经 (*Dirghagama*; tr. by Buddhayaśas and *Zhú Fóniàn* 竺佛念 in 412–413; T.1, no.1). The description of Maitreya in this sūtra collection has been described in detail by Mai (2009). Here, only a few important points will be summarized:

“All the Āgama texts focus on the future career of Maitreya, his appearance in the kingdom of Ketumatī of the Cakravartin ruler named Śaṅkha, and his preaching of the Dharma at the Three Assemblies beneath the dragon flower tree.” (Mai 2009: 161)

As Mai (2009: 162) points out, Kumārajīva’s texts (nos.454 and 456)

“[...] retain the core elements and narrative structure of the main stream Āgama texts, but they also interweave many new elements that make Ketumatī much more fantastic and magical, especially themes and imagery that appear to be aimed at making Ketumatī appear like a buddha-field [...]”

An anonymous Eastern Jin text (*Fóshuō Mìlè láishí jīng* 佛说弥勒来时经,

<sup>①</sup> In the framework of this paper, only a few relevant texts can be treated. Quite mechanically, I will follow here the sequence of the Taishō arrangement. Only “sūtras” will be considered in the framework of this paper and commentary literature is (unfortunately) excluded.

T.14, no.457) is very similar to the account in the *Middle Āgama*. Śāriputra is one of the protagonists in no.457 and inquires about the time when Maitreya will appear. Śākyamuni gives a description of the treasures and the beauty of Jambidvīpa, and the long life expectation and great moral standards of its people. By contrast to the later no.454 by Kumārajīva, the three shortcomings of the people do not contain as number one the reference to “urinating and defecating” but a “mind longing for possession(欲有所得, 434c2). This difference is somewhat puzzling. Although being much shorter than no.454, the structure is very similar, and the narrative continues with a description of the king there and the family Maitreya will be born into. In the last part, the three assemblies are shortly mentioned(all the countless participants attain arhatship). The scripture concludes with a dating of Maitreya’s time of descent.

As such, we can find some sort of “narrative continuity” and development of the theme in the description of Maitreya in the above-mentioned works. By contrast to the “Maitreya scriptures,” the focus is not on his abode and waiting period in Tuṣita Heaven but on his final rebirth in the kingdom of Ketumatī, his co-appearance with a Dharma King(Cakravartin ruler) who establishes the high moral standards in his realm as precondition of Maitreya’s rebirth, as well as Maitreya’s initial teachings to the Three Assemblies. In this way the accounts partially mirror the spiritual career of Śākyamuni.

Therefore, in summary, we can note that up to the time of Kumārajīva in the early fifth-century a variety of Maitreya texts containing similar themes and mythological motifs appeared in China, but they were by no means homogenous. Still, in very basic terms, we can note that there was a core narrative structure and set of themes preserved in the Āgama texts which then served as the textual foundation for further elaboration in the Kumārajīva texts. Beyond this general observation, however, further research is required to address questions of inter-textual relations, the possibility of various oral tradi-

tions connecting these texts, the question of the geographical and cultural origins of some of the texts, and other such text-critical issues. (Mai 2009:162)

*Bānníhuán Jīng* 般泥洹经

In this version of the *Mahāparinirvāṇa sūtra* (T.1, no.6) by an anonymous translator and dated to the Eastern Jin, Maitreya appears in a discussion of Śākyamuni with his disciples, mentioning the prediction (that he will descend as Buddha), his assembly, and that specific persons will attain salvation during the time of the future Buddha.

*Gǔláishìshí Jīng* 古来世时经

This is very short text (T.1, no.44) by an anonymous translator and supposedly rendered into Chinese during the Eastern Jin. The “sūtra” is strikingly short and deals with predictions of future ages. In the last part of the scripture, Maitreya is introduced as the future Buddha by Śākyamuni (“[he will be] like as I am now” 如我今也). At the time of this statement Maitreya is among his assembly and confirms that he will descend during a time when people become 80,000 years of age, and will teach gods and men. Śākyamuni emphasizes the notion of compassion in the salvation of sentient beings, and several other activities, which Maitreya will perform, are mentioned, just in the same way as Śākyamuni did.

*Liùdù Jíjīng* 六度集经

In this famous early collection of narratives translated by Kāng Sēnghuì 康僧会 (T.3, no.152), consisting mostly of jātakas, Maitreya appears in several identification formulas. This is one of the few texts focusing on the “past” of the future Buddha, the time when he earned the merit for his rebirth as Buddha. He also figures as protagonist of one story, the *Sūtra of Maitreya Being Born in a Female Body* (弥勒为女人身经).

*Shēng Jīng* 生经

This is a jātaka collection (T.3, no.154) the translation of which is attributed to Dharmarakṣa of the Eastern Jin. In one passage, it promises the

virtuous listeners to Buddha’s sermon rebirth in Tuṣita Heaven after the end of a long life, where they will worship Maitreya and reach as stage of “no-backsliding” (众人闻之。悉共欣悦。代之踊跃。其人命尽。寿终之后。生兜术天。稽首弥勒。得不退转; 95a18–19).

*Bēihuá Jīng* 悲华经

The text (T.3, no.157; *Karuṇāpuṇḍarīka sūtra*; no.158 is another translation by an anonymous translator) was translated by Dharmakṣema during the Northern Liáng 北凉 (397–460) and seems to be a compilation of shorter texts, focusing on the rebirth in a Pure Land and the vows of Amitabha. Maitreya appears as head of a large group of bodhisattvas among the assembly. There is also a dialogue between the Buddha and Maitreya who mentions his rebirth as Buddha after countless kalpas (尔时弥勒菩萨摩河萨白佛言。世尊。我于往世过十恒河沙等劫时。有大劫名善普遍。于此劫中是娑婆世界。微妙清净一切庄严。尔时有佛出现于世; 173a3–6). Śākyamuni confirms this and predicts the rank of Buddha to him (我今为汝受佛职位; 173a29). Maitreya thereupon instructs the assembly in a sermon.

*Yīqìèzhì Guāngmíng Xiānrén Cíxīn Yīnyuán Bù Shí Ròu Jīng* 一切智光明仙人慈心因缘不食肉经

This *Sūtra on the Omniscient Luminous Sages [Possessing] the Causes and Conditions of a Compassionate Heart and Not Eating Meat* (T.3, no.183; translator unknown and supposedly translated during the Qín 秦 Dynasty, 353–431) is a very short text and one of the few sources on the former lives of Maitreya when he earned the merits to become a future Buddha (therefore, the story will be dealt with in some detail here).<sup>①</sup> The literary structure is that typical of a jātaka. It deals with Maitreya in a former life as Brahmin by the name of Jiābōlì 迦波利, possessing all the marks of a great man (时有迦波利

<sup>①</sup> Another text of the avadāna/jātaka genre in which Maitreya frequently appears as protagonist in short stories is the *Sūtra of the Wise and Foolish* (T.4, no.202). This “sūtra” also has a close connection to the region of the Tarim Basin.



婆罗门子。名弥勒。躯体金色三十二相八十种好; 457c21). He encounters Śākyamuni Buddha and becomes a disciple of him, generating the wish to attain Buddhahood in a future age. When he was unable to obtain food by begging during the rain season, he spotted 500 white rabbits and their king. The rabbit king and his mother wanted to offer their lives in order to save the life of the Brahmin and thereupon jumped into the fire (自投火中母随后入). Being aware of violating the precept against eating meat, the Brahmin rescues the rabbits from the fire pit (作此语已自投火坑与兔并命; 458c7). In typical jātaka style, nature and spirits are described as reacting to this great deed. The rabbit king is identified as Śākyamuni and the rabbit child as Rāhula (时白兔王者今现我身释迦文尼佛是。时兔儿者今罗睺罗是; 458c14-15), and the Brahmin as Maitreya Bodhisattva Mahāsattva (今此众中婆罗门子弥勒菩萨摩诃萨是; 458c17). The story concludes with the prediction that Maitreya will reach Buddhahood on the Diamond seat under the Lónghuá Bodhi Tree, during the rule of a Cakravartin King, hundreds of millions of years after the *nirvāṇa* of Śākyamuni (我涅槃后五十六亿万岁。当于穰佉转轮圣王国土华林园中金刚座处龙华菩提树下。得成佛道; 458c17-19). Identifications of the other protagonists (the remaining rabbits, tree spirits, etc.) follow in the narrative. The text concludes with a more general discussion about meat eating, interpreting it as a violation against the monastic prohibitions, followed by a passage on the significance of compassion. Remarkably, the text cites the *Mílè púsà xiàshēng jīng* 弥勒菩萨下生经。

Some remarks on the role of Maitreya in Prajñāpāramitā texts

There is a set of Prajñāpāramitā texts containing references to Maitreya, including the *Pañcaviṃṣati-sāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā-sūtra* (*Fàngguāng bānrě jīng* 放光般若经, T.8, no.221; ① and *Móhē bānrě bōluómì jīng* 摩诃般若波罗蜜经, T.8, no.223), the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā-sūtra* (*Dàoxíng bānrě jīng*

① Translated during the Eastern Jin by the Khotanese monk Mokṣala. No.223 was translated by Kumārajīva from Kucha.

道行般若经, T.8, no.224; ① *Dànmíng dù jīng* 大明度经, T.8, no.225; *Móhē bānrě chāo jīng* 摩诃般若钞经, T.8, n.226; *Xiǎopīn bānrě bōluómì jīng* 小品般若波罗蜜经, T.8, no.227). Common to this early material is the feature that Maitreya appears as dialogue partner of Śākyamuni's disciple Subhūti, discussing doctrinal issues such as the Six Perfections, Emptiness, etc. Because of the early date of the translations, the use of language is occasionally awkward (especially in no.225). Sometimes there are predictions of the rebirth during the time of Maitreya:

佛告阿难:是三万比丘,于是寿终当生阿閼佛国。却后六十二劫皆当作佛,号声闻支头。复有六万欲天子,皆当生弥勒佛前,皆当出家作沙门。

Śākyamuni told Ānanda: "This 30,000 monks will be reborn in the Buddha country of Akṣobhya [Buddha], and after another 62 kalpas they will become buddhas, being referred to as *shēngwén zhītóu* (śrāvaka-branches). In addition, 60,000 princes of the gods of the Realm of Desire will be reborn together with Maitreya Buddha, and all will renounce home and become monks.

The *Jì Zhū fāng Děngxué Jīng* 济诸方等学经

This text (T.9, no.275; *Sarvavaipulyavidyāsiddha sūtra*) was translated during the Eastern Jin by Dharmarakṣa. Maitreya is referred to as *Mílè púsà dàshì* 弥勒菩萨大士 and in the dialogues he is addressed as Ajita (阿逸 "Inconvincible One") by Śākyamuni. Topics include discussions on the universality of Buddhahood, the importance of sūtra texts, and the reliance on Buddha's words. The scripture also contains long passages of self-referencing:

① No.224 was translated by Lokakṣema at the end of the 2nd century; no.225 was translated by Zhī Qiān 支谦 during the first half of the 3rd century; no.226 is a translation by Dharmapriya and Zhū Fóniàn; no.227 was produced by Kumārajīva.

尔时世尊告弥勒菩萨。阿逸当知。诸过去如来至真等正觉。无不讲说此济诸方等经典之要。

At that time the World-honoured One addressed Maitreya: "Ajita, you should know this: All former Tathāgatas have reached Perfect Supreme Enlightenment, and there was not one who did not expound the essence of this *Jī zhūfāng děng[xué] jīng*.

The *Dàshèng Fāngguǎng Zǒngchí Jīng* 大乘方广总持经

This relatively later text (T.9, no.275) of the Suí Dynasty, Extensive Dhāraṇī Sūtra of the Great Vehicle, translated by Vinītaruci, is included here since it resembles no.274 in terms of passages on Maitreya and the strong self-referencing tendencies:<sup>①</sup>

尔时佛告弥勒菩萨摩訶萨言。阿逸多。此大乘方广总持法门非我独说。过去未来及今现在十方世界无量诸佛亦常宣说。若有众生于佛所说言非佛说及谤法僧。而此谤者当堕恶道受地狱苦。尔时佛告弥勒菩萨摩訶萨言。若有善男子善女人发菩提心。于此大乘方广总持经典。受持读诵复为人说。当知是人不会堕恶道。(379b27-c5)

At that time, Buddha addressed Maitreya Bodhisattva Mahāsattva, saying: "Ajita! This method of the extensive dhāraṇī of the Great Vehicle is not something which I alone proclaim. The innumerable buddhas of the worlds of the ten directions, past, present, and future, also have permanently expounded it. If there is a sentient being which states that something that was expounded by the Buddha is not the word of the Buddha and [by that] slanders the Dharma and the Sangha, then this slanderer will fall into evil paths and be subjected to the sufferings of hell." At that time Buddha addressed Maitreya Bodhisattva Mahāsattva, saying: "If

① This type of heavily "self-promoting" passages is frequently associated with "apocryphal" texts.

there is a son or daughter of good family arousing the mind with the aim of achieving enlightenment, and in respect to this Extensive Dhāraṇī Sūtra of the Great Vehicle, upholds and recites it, and furthermore expounds it for other people, you should know that this person will not fall into the evil paths [of rebirth]."

The *Dàfāngguǎng Fó Huáyán Jīng* 大方广佛华严经

This Eastern Jin version of the Avataṃsaka sūtra (T.9, no.278) is a rendering by Buddhahhadra. In one of the jātaka-like narratives, a Cakravartin King is identified with Maitreya (732c16). An important appearance of Maitreya is in the story of Shāncái 善财 (Sudhana) who successively visits 53 teachers, Maitreya being one of the most important of them. In the long passage, Maitreya predicts that Sudhana will soon reach equality with the bodhisattva. In some passages of the text, the concepts of Maitreya and cakravartin are discussed parallel to each other.

The *Wénshūshìlì Fótǔ Yánjìng Jīng* 文殊师利佛土净经

This text (*Mañjuśrībuddhaḥsetraguṇavyūha sūtra*; T.11, no.318)<sup>①</sup> was supposedly translated by Dharmarakṣa and focuses on various buddhas and their realms. The main protagonist is Mañjuśrī and his future Buddha world. However, also Maitreya is frequently mentioned, receiving the teachings from Śākyamuni.

The *Fājué Jīngxīn Jīng* 发觉净心经

This text (*Adhyāśayaśaṃcodana*; T.12, no.327) was translated by the Gandhāran monk Jñānagupta during the Suí Dynasty. The text is mentioned here since references to Maitreya are very numerous. In the text he is referred to as "Elder Maitreya" and leads sixty bodhisattvas to the place of the Buddha. Śākyamuni encourages them in the following way:

① On this text, see Nattier 2000: 79.

莫于他边见过失，勿说他人是与非，不著他家净活命，诸所恶言当弃舍。

Do not see the faults of others; do not claim that other people are right or wrong; do not get attached to the pure life conduct of others; you should get rid of all evil speech! (44c21-22)

After that he preaches about four kinds of dharmas. An important topic is the decline of the Dharma after Buddha's death, and merits and mistakes are painstakingly listed. Śākyamuni entrusts Maitreya the task of protecting others against these wrongdoings. There follow lists of disasters one should contemplate on, as well as a very long list of potential hindrances.

The *Fóshuō Āshéshì Wángnǚ Āshùdá Púsà Jīng* 佛说阿阇贯女王阿术达菩萨经

The translation of this text (*Aśokadattavyākaraṇa*; T.12, no.337) is attributed to Dharmarakṣa and contains a story concerning the king of the time when Maitreya will descend to become a Buddha. There are also predictions of Śākyamuni concerning the rebirth together with Maitreya: The story deals with the wife of Aśoka by name of Yuèguāng 月光 (Candraprabha) who, based on their achievement of merits, generates a mind seeking for enlightenment; however, she is hindered by her female body:

尔时佛知王妇月明心所愿。佛告舍利弗。见王妇月明不。舍利弗言。见王妇月明。持是功德所作。当弃女人身得男子已。当生忉利天上作天名宝第一。弥勒佛来下有国王。名呵当为作太子。字终好。当供养弥勒尽寿命。却后当为弥勒作沙门。

At that time the Buddha knew what the mind of the king's wife Moonlight had wished for. The Buddha addressed Śāriputra: "Did you see the king's wife Moonlight?" Śāriputra said: "If have seen the king's wife Moonlight." [The Buddha said:] "Based on her performance of meritorious

acts, she shall abandon the body of a female and attain manhood (i.e., rebirth as a man). She (i.e., he) shall be born in Tuṣita Heaven and become a god by name of Bǎo Dìyī ("Treasure Number One"). At the time when Maitreya will descend there will be a king by the name of Hédāng and she (he) will become her (his) crown prince styled Zhōnghǎo ("Finally Good") and she (he) shall make offerings to Maitreya throughout her (his) long life. Later on, she (he) shall become a monk of Maitreya.

The *Fóshuō Dàshèng Fāngděng Yàohuì Jīng* 佛说大乘方等要慧经

The translation of this early text (T.12, no.348; *Maitreyapariṣcchādharmāṣṭa[ka]*)<sup>①</sup> is attributed to ān Shìgāo (?-168 CE). This extremely short "sūtra" gives an account of Śākyamuni teaching Maitreya Bodhisattva about the significance of compassion as part of eight ways for attaining supreme knowledge.

## Concluding remarks

Although this study is restricted to a small portion of relatively early Chinese textual material dealing with Maitreya, certain features of Maitreya narratives can be observed. First of all—despite the reoccurrence of certain themes and structures in various texts—the accounts on Maitreya are very diverse in nature, and different scriptures contain various focal points, e.g.:

- Maitreya in the assembly of Śākyamuni (often receiving a prediction and teachings); generally, no "special" features of the figure are described; rather he passively accepts the prediction of his future role. Gen-

① For a short description of the text, see Meng 2012: 19.

erating a future Buddha seems to be caused solely by the merits and powers of Śākyamuni.

- Descriptions of Maitreya in Tuṣita Heaven often do not necessarily focus on Maitreya himself but rather on the description of the paradise-like living conditions.

- A similar tendency can be observed in the description of the extremely high living standards of the population in Jambudvīpa (not quite unlike those in Tuṣita Heaven), the target location of Maitreya's rebirth. The attentive reader might ask why there is the need of a Buddha to appear at all, since suffering is nearly absent there. Only with many narrative twists and turns, a "reasoning" for this is constructed.

- The construction of a "life-story" of Maitreya similar to Śākyamuni's, including stories of his former lives. In this material, it is attempted to focus on a development based on cause and effect (i.e., the attainment of merit which will eventually lead to the rebirth as a Buddha). This approach is often somewhat contradictory to the frequently encountered notion that the appearance and career of Maitreya is based on the powers and accomplishments of Śākyamuni.

The variety of narrative elements and structures—often somewhat contradictory to each other but encountered in one and the same text—seem to have hampered the construction of more consistent stories, or the development of authoritative "master narratives" concerning the figure of Maitreya. Indeed, consistent and comprehensive "biographical" narratives on Śākyamuni also appeared at relatively late dates, such as the *Lalitavistara* (*Pūyào jīng* 普曜经) and the *Buddhacarita* (*Fóshuō xíngzàn* 佛所行赞) which established a "chronological" order of events in Buddha's life, and which had an enormous impact on the perception of the development of the sage (the art of Gandhāra might also have played an important role in this respect since scenes of Bud-

dha's life were for the first time depicted systematically and often also in chronological order, emphasizing the temporal and "logical" sequence of events). Of great importance was the immense *jātaka* literature concerning Śākyamuni, recounting the previous lives and attainment of merits, establishing a logical and chronological link between the life as a practicing bodhisattva and the attainment of enlightenment and Buddhahood. Important to mention is also the development of standardized scenes, depicting and describing key events in Buddha's career (e.g., the so-called Eight Scenes, *bāxiàng* 八相).

Surveying parts of the "canonical" literature with references to Maitreya, there are clear indications that attempts of constructing narratives parallel to those on Śākyamuni were undertaken (e.g., certain features of the Maitreya descriptions which can be found for example in the *Āgamas*, the *Divyāvadāna*, T.454 and T.457; see above). Certain texts we discussed also tried to supplement the important "logical" link between the attainments of merit, undertaken in previous lives, and the subsequent rebirth to become a Buddha. In addition, many early Maitreya texts are not extant, but their titles suggest that they might have tried to deal with aspects parallel to Śākyamuni's life (e.g., the encounter with Māra which is one of the most popular topics in the narration and depiction of Śākyamuni's life story; or, by providing a larger corpus of Maitreya *jātakas*). However, based on a survey of surviving sources, the accounts on Maitreya stayed somewhat fragmentary and inhomogeneous, and there are no authoritative master narratives (despite the popular "Three Maitreya Scriptures" which are in many aspects contradictory to each other). This might not have had much relevance for the practical aspects of Maitreya worship in medieval China, however, it might have influenced the development of the "many faces of Maitreya" (see for example Kitagawa 1988), as well as specific forms of Maitreya cult which otherwise might not have been developed in the presence of more homogenous narratives. In the long run, it might also have been one of the factors which led to the relative decline of Maitreya



practices, as compared to their immense popularity during certain periods of medieval China (culminating during the end of the 5th century), as well as the increase of popularity of other and more consistent imaginations concerning Pure Lands and utopian abodes of peace and happiness. Indeed, Maitreya's image seems to have got trapped between narratives focusing on the extension of Buddha ages à la Śākyamuni Buddha, on the one hand, and the dominating focus on the pure abodes, on the other; between the idea of attainment leading to enlightenment (based on Śākyamuni's former and present lives), and the notion of "other-power" (i.e., Maitreya as a product of Śākyamuni's virtues and merits).

## Epilogue

In the following drawing I attempt to indicate schematically some of these many aspects of Maitreya narratives. In addition to the paradigm of here/now, here/here, there/now, there/here, there/here (see Nattier 1988), I also added "here/before" which is of great importance in accounts on Maitreya. Indeed, in canonical material, Maitreya is mostly discussed from the angle of the relative past, i.e., from the angle of Śākyamuni.

As "double" and continuation of Śākyamuni Buddha, Maitreya accounts permanently move between "parallel accounts" to Buddha's biography and other elements such as the emphasis on the glory of Tuṣita Heaven, and the perfect world of Jambudvīpa. Not incidentally, Maitreya scriptures such as T. 14, no.456 (tr. by Kumaraśīva) occasionally feature passages directly parallel to Amitabha texts. The special features of various Maitreya accounts actually hinge on these conceptual overlaps between the description of Tuṣita, life in Jambudvīpa, and the image of paradisiac abodes constructed in other Pure Land accounts (e.g., Pure Buddha Lands, the Pure Land of Amitabha, etc.). In the drawing this is indicated by the orange squares with broken lines. The

blue arrows indicate the possibilities of Maitreya encounters as outlined in the various scriptures, i.e., rebirth in Tuṣita Heaven, the dwelling in Tuṣita Heaven together with Maitreya (and accompanying him during his descent), and the possibility of being directly reborn in Jambudvīpa at the time of Maitreya's appearance there. The blue arrow with broken lines indicates the there/now perspective, i.e., encountering Maitreya in visualization practices. The red arrows indicate the movements of Śākyamuni and Maitreya between Tuṣita and the respective worlds. The broken red line symbolizes the here/now perspective, i.e., the embodiment of Maitreya in the relative present (clearing all evil away and establishing a pure world), as narrated in so-called messianic texts. The important element of previous life practices is only marginally development in the case of Maitreya narratives.

