HOW THE MAHĀYĀNA BEGAN

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Since Professor Mayeda has done me the honour of inviting me to contribute a paper to this volume, I would like to use the opportunity to put forward for discussion among our colleagues what I believe to be a new hypothesis. This hypothesis can be simply stated. It is that the rise of the Mahāyāna is due to the use of writing. To put it more accurately: the early Mahāyāna texts owe their survival to the fact that they were written down; any earlier texts which deviated from or criticized the canonical norms (by which I mean approximately the contents of the *Vinaya Khandhaka* and *Sutta Vibhaṅga* and the Four *Nikāya* of the *Sutta Piṭaka*) could not survive because they were not included among the texts which the Sangha preserved orally.

Few Indologists have publicly reflected on how unusual a feat was performed by the early Buddhists in preserving a large corpus of texts for a long period—probably three to four centuries—purely by word of mouth. An admirable exception is the article by Lance Cousins, "Pali Oral Literature"[(1)], which so far as I know has not yet had the recognition it deserves. Cousins in fact devotes less than six pages to the oral character of the earliest Pali texts, and as my approach is somewhat different from his I shall have to cover some of the same ground again. But I hope to prove the

truth of his claim that "Consideration of the oral nature of the nikayas offers several profitable lines of historical investigation."(2)

Oral literature has been preserved all over the world, but modern research has shown that for the most part this literature is re-created at every re-telling. Verse epic and folk tale alike may have contents preserved over centuries, but they tend to be composed anew, often by professionals or semi-professionals, from a vast repertoire of clichés, stock phrases. That the preservation of oral literature may appear fairly informal must not make us forget that it depends nevertheless on institutions, on recognized and regular arrangements for training, rehearsal and performance.

The early Buddhists wished to preserve the words of their great teacher, texts very different in character from the general run of oral literature, for they presented logical and sometimes complex arguments. The precise wording mattered. Cousins has rightly drawn attention to the typical oral features of the *suttantas*: great use of mnemonic lists, stock passages (clichés) and redundancy. He further points out that the differences between the versions of the texts preserved by various sects and in various languages are much what we would expect of oral texts. "These divergences are typically greatest in matters of little importance—such items as the locations of suttas, the names of individual speakers or the precise order of events. Only very rarely are they founded on doctrinal or sectarian differences."(3) In corroboration I might add that the Buddhist tradition itself was well aware of this distinction. In its account of how the Canon came to be compiled, at the First Council, the introduction to the *Sumaṅgala Vilāsinī* frankly says(4) that words of the narrative portions were inserted

on that occasion, and thus clearly distinguishes between the words attributed to the Buddha and their settings. From the religious point of view this is perfectly understandable: the narrative framework of the sayings is not relevant to salvation.

Where I slightly differ from Cousins, as will appear, is in his stress on the probable improvisatory element in early recitations of the Buddha's preachings. The whole purpose of the enterprise (as certainly Cousins would agree) was to preserve the Buddha's words. I think the earliest Pali texts may well be rather like the Rajasthani folk epic studied and described by John Smith, in which the essential kernel is in fact preserved verbatim, but variously wrapped up in a package of conventional verbiage which can change with each performance.(5) It is significant that this is done by a class of professional performers who are mostly illiterate.

Be that as it may, I suggest that it would never have occurred to the Buddhists that such a feat of preservation was even possible had they not had before them the example of the brahmins. Already for centuries the brahmins had been orally preserving their sacred texts, Vedic literature, by making that preservation virtually coterminous with their education. That education, which was the right and the duty of every brahmin male, might last up to 36 years;(6) it consisted of memorizing Vedic texts, and in some cases also subsidiary treatises (*vedāṅga*). By the time of the Buddha, Vedic literature was too vast to be memorized by any single person except perhaps the rare genius; it was divided into various branches (*śākhā*) of oral tradition.

Vedic literature contains both verse and prose texts. The oldest corpus of texts, the *Ṛg Veda*, is a collection of hymns in verse,

arranged in ten "books" (*maṇḍala*); the six "family books", *maṇḍala* II—VII, which constitute its kernel, are arranged in order of length, from the shortest to the longest.(7) A hymn is called a *sūkta*, literally "(that which is) well spoken". The later Vedic texts are mostly in prose. It is generally held, and I agree, that at the time of the Buddha (whenever exactly that was) only the few earliest *Upaniṣads* existed. The *Upaniṣads* constitute the latest stratum of the Veda and are known as its "conclusion", *anta*, in the logical as well as the purely temporal sense.

I believe that the Buddhist Canon has left us more cluest hat it is modelled on Vedic literature than has been generally recognized. In my view, early Buddhist poems were called *sūkta*, which in Pali (and other forms of Middle Indo-Aryan) becomes *sutta*, as in *Sutta Nipāta*. Literally a *sūkta* is synonymous with a *subhāṣita*, something "well spoken", in this case by the Buddha or one of his immediate disciples; but the word also alludes to the Veda. I am of course aware that many centuries later *sutta* was re-Sanskritized as *sūtra*. A *sūtra* is however a recognized genre of Sanskrit literature, a prose text composed with the greatest possible brevity, so that it can normally not be understood without a lengthy commentary. No early Pali text is anything like that. I would even go further, and tentatively suggest that if Pali *sutta* can equal Sanskrit *veda*, Pali *suttanta* can equal Sanskrit *vedānta*; then the prose texts of the Buddha's discourses are the "conclusions" of the Buddhist sacred literature.

These linguistic remarks are however speculative, and even if they are shown to be wrong, this would not affect my main argument at all. It is a fact that parts of the Pali Canon are

arranged on the Vedic principle of increasing length of units: the *Aṅguttara Nikāya* (parallel to the *Ekottara Āgama*); the *Thera-* and *Therī-Gāthā*; the *Jātaka* book; and —most interestingly—the poems of a section of the *Sutta Nipāta*, the *Aṭṭhaka Vagga*. There is an episode in the Canon[8] in which the Buddha asks a young monk whom he is meeting for the first time to tell him some Dhamma; the monk recites the whole *Aṭṭhaka Vagga* and the Buddha commends him. The text does not specifically say who originally composed the poems of the *Aṭṭhaka Vagga*; it could be the Buddha himself; it could be the young monk's teacher, Mahā Kaccāna, who was a reputed preacher; it could be yet other monks; and it could be a combination of these, since not all the poems need be by the same author. But what is clear is that this set of sixteen poems was collected early and arranged on the Rg Vedic principle, by increasing length.

As mentioned above, numbered lists are an important mnemonic device, and they are indeed omni-present in the literature of both early Buddhism and early Jainism. Another such device is redundancy. The earliest Buddhist prose texts are clogged with repetitions. The brahmins went to extraordinary lengths in preserving the *Ṛg Veda* by memorizing the words in various patterns. This did not appeal to the Buddhists, probably because of their stress on the meaning of the texts; but the endless redundancies of the patterns of words in the Pali *abhidhamma* texts do somewhat recall the Vedic *Krama-pāṭha*, *Jaṭā-pāṭha* and *Ghana-pāṭha*[9] in their formal character. A third mnemonic device is versification. The stricter the metre, the easier it is to preserve the wording. The *anuṣṭubh/vatta* metre is thus less effective for this purpose than

the stricter metres in which most of the *Sutta Nipāta* is composed.

Obviously there was no means of preserving the Buddha's words as he spoke them. They had to be formalized in texts, prose or verse, deliberate compositions which were then committed to memory, and later systematically transmitted to pupils. Were this not so, they would have been lost, like the teachings of the teachers contemporary to the Buddha who are mentioned in the Canon, notably in the *Sāmañña-phala Suttanta*. The case of Jainism is particularly instructive. According to the Digambara tradition, the oldest texts preserved are not the original canon: that has been lost.(10) It seems to me highly unlikely that such a tradition would have arisen were it not true, whereas one can easily understand the motivation for the opposite view, taken by the Śvetāmbara Jains, that the texts preserved are in fact part of the original canon. All Jains agree that *some* of their canon was lost at an early stage. The Śvetāmbara tradition divided monks into those who were *jina-kappa*, the solitary wandering ascetics striving for liberation in this lifetime, and the *thera-kappa*,(11) professional monks concerned to preserve the Jain tradition, and in particular the scriptures. This precisely mirrors the distinction introduced into the Buddhist Theravādin Sangha, probably in the late first century B.C., between monks who were to undertake the *vipassanā-dhura*, the duty of meditating and so attaining *nirvāṇa* themselves, and those who undertook the *gantha-dhura*, the duty of preserving the books, i.e., the Buddhist scriptures.(12) But here I am running ahead of my story.

My point is that from the first the institution which performed the function of preserving the Buddhist texts must have been

the Sangha. Whether we choose to consider that initially this function was overt or latent does not matter. Certainly the Buddha's primary conception of the Sangha was as an association of men and women trying to reach *nirvāṇa* and creating conditions which facilitated this quest for all of them. But the Sangha was a missionary organization too: the first sixty monks were dispatched to preach to whoever would listen.[13] That is of course well known. But somehow scholars have not given much thought to the mechanics of how they would have remembered what to preach, and then how their converts, who had not met the Buddha himself, would have remembered it in their turn. It is my contention that the preservation of the texts required organization, and that the Buddhist laity were never organized in a way which would have ensured the transmission of texts down the generations.

I must not be misunderstood as saying that only monks and nuns knew texts by heart. What I am saying is that only they were so organized that they could hand them on to future generations. An interesting passage in the *Vinaya*[14] says that a monk may interrupt his rains retreat for up to seven days if a layman or laywoman summons him with the message that he or she knows a text and is afraid it will get lost—in other words, that it needs to be passed on to the Sangha.

We do not know how the Sangha was organized for this purpose in the earliest period. Several times in the Canon monks are referred to as *vinaya-dhara*, *dhamma-dhara* and *mātikā-dhara*, which means that they had memorized respectively monastic rules, sermons (*suttanta*), or the lists of terms which later developed into the *abhidhamma* works. But I know of no passage which

makes it clear whether these were ever exclusive specialisms. Later monks certainly did specialize in memorizing particular texts or groups of texts,[15] and this apparently continued even after they had been committed to writing in the first century B.C.. According to the introduction to the *Sumaṅgala Vilāsinī*, the *Vinaya Piṭaka* was entrusted to Upāli and his followers (*nissitaka*) and each of the four *Nikāya* similarly to an important monk and his followers.[16] Since Buddhaghosa is merely editing the commentaries, which were written down with the Canon, I assume that this statement reflects the way that the Sangha was organized for memorizing the texts in the first century B.C.. We do not know how much older this division of labour—reminiscent of the brahmin *śākhā*—can be. But the logic of the situation suggests that from the first monks must have specialized, being taught texts first by their own teachers and then by other monks they encountered both in their monasteries and on their travels; and that the Councils (*Saṅgāyanā*), better termed Communal Recitations, served the function of systematizing knowledge and perhaps of organizing its further preservation. In fact, the very division of the sermons into the four *Nikāya* was probably for this purpose, and I suspect that the four *Nikāya* basically represent four traditions of memorization. It may be significant that in the passage of the *Sumaṅgala Vilāsinī* already cited the four *Nikāya* are referred to as four *saṅgīti* and the *Dīgha Nikāya* as the *Dīgha Saṅgīti*.[17] The words *saṅgīti* and *saṅgāyanā* are of course synonymous.

The Canon itself has preserved traces of how all this worked, and even shows that the Buddhists were conscious of the contrast in this respect between themselves and the Jains. The *Saṅgīti*

Suttanta has it that at the death of Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta his followers began to disagree about what he had actually preached.[18] Sāriputta makes this the occasion for rehearsing a summary of the Buddha's teaching arranged in numbered lists of increasing length. It does not matter whether the text faithfully records a historical incident (which we can never know for certain); the point is rather that the Buddhists were aware that this kind of systematic rehearsal was necessary if Buddhism was to be preserved as a coherent doctrine and way of life (discipline) and I cannot conceive how it could in fact have survived had such occasions not taken place.

In another text[19] the Buddha is reported as saying that four conditions make for the forgetting (*saṃmosa*) and disappearance of the true teaching (*saddhamma*). The first is if monks memorize the texts incorrectly. Another is if learned monks who know the texts do not take care to rehearse others in reciting them.[20]

A corollary of all this is that once meetings of monks (whether or not these correspond to the First and Second Councils of tradition) had decided what was to be memorized, it must have been difficult, if not impossible, to slip a new text into the curriculum. That is not to claim that no change occurred; but the changes must have been mostly unintentional, due to lapses of memory and to the contamination of texts as someone's memory slipped from one text to another. We learn of such a body of authorized texts from the passage[21] in the *Mahā Parinibbāna Suttanta* concerning what Rhys Davids translates as the four "Great Authorities" (*mahāpadesa*). Actually this translation is misleading, for the number four refers to the instances of referral to authority, not to

the number of authorities. Of those there is but one. When anyone claims to have an authentic text, its authenticity is to be judged simply by seeing whether it harmonizes with the texts (*sutta* and *vinaya*) already current in the Order. If not, it is to be rejected: the Sangha will not try to preserve it.

Under these circumstances, any text which is critical of the current teachings or introduces something which is palpably new has no chance of survival. It is possible that hundreds or even thousands of monks, nuns and Buddhist lay followers had visions or other inspirations which put new teachings into their minds, possible that they composed texts embodying those teachings — but we shall never know. For without writing those texts could not be preserved.

Archaeology has recovered no piece of writing in India which can definitely be dated earlier than the inscriptions of Asoka. It is however generally agreed that the fact that in Asokan inscriptions the Brahmi script shows some regional variety proves that it must have been introduced a while earlier. It is *prima facie* probable that writing was first used mainly for two purposes: by businessmen for keeping accounts and by rulers for public administration. This in fact fits what we learn from the *Vinaya Piṭaka*.

The *Vinaya Piṭaka* is the only part of the Pali Canon to mention books or writing. There are mentions in the *Jātaka* book but only in the prose part, which is commentary, not canonical text. It is sometimes said[22] that books are mentioned in the *Dīgha Nikāya*, but that is almost certainly incorrect. The single passage in question is at *D.* iii, 94, in the *Aggañña Suttanta*, where brahmins

are being lampooned. By a joking pun they as students of the Veda are said to be "non-meditators" (*ajjhāyaka*); they settle near towns and villages and make *ganthe*. Later *gantha* certainly comes to mean a book; but basically it means "knot". In the *Sutta Nipāta* (23) brahmins are said to "knot together mantras"— the words are *mante ganthetvā*—and the reference is to their composing Vedic texts. The metaphor is much the same as that in *sūtra*, the "stringing together" of a text, and that in *tantra*, in which a text is "woven". Though the Rhys Davids translate *ganthe* at *D.* iii, 94 as "books", they do not seem to mean by this books as physical objects, for they quote and correctly translate the commentary on the word: "compiling the three Vedas and teaching others to repeat them."(24)

To present the evidence concerning writing in the *Vinaya Piṭaka* I can do no better than attempt to summarize what was so admirably said more than a century ago by Rhys Davids and Oldenberg in the introduction to their translations of *Vinaya* texts.(25) "In the first place, there are several passages which confirm in an indisputable manner the existence of the art of writing at the time when the Vinaya texts were put into their present shape."(26) There is a reference to a royal notice about an absconding thief.(27) There is a reference to writing as a "superior craft" (*ukkaṭṭha sippa*).(28) There is a reference to tempting someone to suicide by means of a written message.(29) And though nuns are forbidden "animal arts" (*tiracchāna vijjā*), there is no fault in their learning to write.(30) (This last reference is brief and obscure, but my feeling is that Rhys Davids, Oldenberg and Miss Horner have all misinterpreted it and it refers to drawing amulets, something like *yantra*.)(31)

"But it is a long step from the use of writing for such public or private notifications to the adoption of it for the purpose of recording an extensive and sacred literature."(32) At this point Rhys Davids and Oldenberg might have added that brahmins did not write down their scriptures for many centuries after writing came into use among them; but they wished to restrict access to their scriptures to the top three *varṇa*, whereas Buddhists had no desire to keep theirs secret.

"Had the sacred texts been written down and read, books, manuscripts, and the whole activity therewith connected, must have necessarily played a very important part in the daily life of the members of the Buddhist Order."(33) The *Vinaya* mentions every item of property allowed to a monk and every utensil found in a monastery; but it never mentions either manuscripts or writing materials of any kind. But on the other hand there are several references to the need to acquire a text by learning it orally.

The Pali commentaries record that the texts were first written down when it was found that there was only one monk alive who still knew a canonical text, the *Mahā Niddesa*.(34) We have seen above that earlier when it seemed that there was only one person who still knew a text a monk was enjoined to interrupt his rains retreat to go and learn it. In the first century B.C. a surer technique was put to use.

The Pali Canon (with commentaries) was finally written down for fear of losing it. Maybe it is a corollary of this fact that the *pātimokkha* as such is not a canonical text. It is of course embedded in the *Sutta Vibhaṅga*. But maybe no need was felt to make manuscripts of the code which every monk had to know

by heart. A text in constant use is in less danger of being forgotten.

There has long been a general consensus that the earliest surviving Mahāyāna texts go back to the second or first century B.C.. This chronology, albeit imprecise, clearly fits the time when writing came more into use and it was possible to commit large texts to writing. Maybe this had something to do with better materials. To discuss in detail the use of writing for brahminical Sanskrit works is both beyond my competence and unnecessary here, but I may remark that Patañjali's *Mahā-bhāṣya* is clearly a written, not an oral text, and it is commonly dated to the second century B.C., on rather strong evidence.

It may be objected that written works too may perish, and are likely to do so unless an institution guards them. To this I would agree; but it is not an objection to my hypothesis. Certainly the great majority of Mahāyāna—indeed, of *all* later Buddhist—works were lost in their original versions in Indian languages. But many did survive long enough to be translated into Chinese and/or Tibetan, and that is all that my hypothesis requires. A single manuscript in a monastic library, studied by no one, could be picked up and read, even translated, by a curious browser or visiting scholar.

This ends the real argument for my hypothesis, so that my article could end here. But it would be a pity not to mention that the early Mahāyāna texts themselves offer what might be seen as corroborative evidence. It is well known that the *Lotus Sūtra* commends the enshrinement of written scriptures in stupas as the equivalent of corporeal relics. Dr. Gregory Schopen has

shown[35] that early Mahāyāna texts, even before the *Lotus Sūtra*, have a veritable "cult of the book". In those early texts, he writes, "the merit derived from the cult of the book is always expressed in terms of its comparative superiority to that derived from the *stūpa*/relic cult."[36] By book here is meant manuscript; and Schopen shows that the text typically prescribes and glorifies its own worship in written form. Schopen's otherwise brilliant article is slightly marred by an occasional failure to distinguish "the book" as a written object from texts in general; and I think he may lay too much stress on the localization of the cult. My feeling is that these texts preserve a sense of wonder at this marvellous invention which permits an individual's opinions or experiences to survive whether or not anyone agrees or cares. In a sense, they are celebrating their own survival. *Scripta manent* goes the Latin tag: "Writings survive." But perhaps only the Buddhists wrote panegyrics on it.

I should perhaps conclude by remarking that although there are several other theories current about the origin of the Mahāyāna, my hypothesis does not, so far as I am aware, either refute or corroborate any of them, since it approaches the problem on a different level. To put it differently: the other theories mainly say what is different about Mahāyāna, but they do not say why that different form of religion should have (apparently) arisen when it did. My hypothesis, I repeat, is that different forms of Buddhism may have arisen earlier, but we shall never know, for they were doomed to be ephemeral. I am not siding with those who claim that the Mahāyāna represents an aspect of the Buddha's teaching which was somehow preserved "underground", maybe

among the laity, till it surfaced in the texts we have; on the contrary, my argument is precisely that such a thing is impossible.

The most widespread view of the matter is that the Mahāyāna is the Buddhism of the laity. By and large I disagree with that theory.[37] I hope to show in other publications that it rests on a misconception of what it was to be a Buddhist layman in ancient India. I strongly agree, of course, that the earliest Buddhism was primarily a religion of the Sangha; and that was for many reasons, not merely for the one with which this paper has been concerned. The other reasons remained valid even after the introduction of writing for recording scriptures. But certainly there were laymen—albeit a small minority—who knew how to write, so that it became technically possible for a layman to write down his own religious views. Whether there were any institutions other than Buddhist monasteries which were likely to preserve such writings is another matter.

Notes

(1) L.S. Cousins, "Pali Oral Literature", in Philip Denwood and Alexander Piatigorsky (edd.), *Buddhist Studies Ancient and Modern*, London 1983, pp. 1—11.

(2) Cousins, p. 9.

(3) Cousins, p. 5.

(4) I, 12: *saṃbandha-vacana-mattaṃ·····pakkhipitvā*. Literally this means "only interpolating connecting words"; this is less than the narrative items to which Cousins is referring. The texts would not go so far in impugning their own veracity. But the passage does make the essential distinction between what is *Buddha-vacana*, "the words of the Buddha", and may therefore not be tampered with, and what is not.

(5) J.D. Smith, *"The Singer or the Song*: a Reassessment of Lord's

'Oral Theory'", *Man* (N.S.) 12, 1977, pp. 141—53. It would be hard to exaggerate the importance of Smith's observations for the study of oral literature in general and early Indian texts in particular. On analyzing his recordings of performances of an oral epic by performers who had never met, Smith found that though they even varied in metre, they shared a common nucleus which conveyed all the important meaning. When the words of this nucleus are put together, they form a metrical text, and "it is easy to demonstrate that [that text] exists in what is, in essence, a single unitary form memorised by all its performers" (p. 146). This nuclear text shows only unimportant variations, in such matters as order, grammar and use of synonyms (p. 147). Yet what is extraordinary is that this nuclear text is never presented as a unity, but only word by word or phrase by phrase, each fragment being embedded in "large quantities of semantically lightweight verbal material" (p. 145). This means that though what is remembered is basically metrical, it is presented in a form which destroys that metre. This shows how complex the relation between verse and prose could become.

(6) *Manu-smṛti* III, 1. The text there refers to the three Vedas; but it was presumably only those who aspired to be schoolteachers who attempted that feat.

(7) "……books II-VII, if allowance is made for later additions, form a series of collections which contain a successively increasing number of hymns." Arthur A. Macdonell, *A History of Sanskrit Literature*, reprinted Delhi 1965, p. 34.

(8) *Vinaya* I, 196=*Udāna* V, 6. In the latter passage it says that the monk recited sixteen poems, in the *Vinaya* merely that he recited "all".

(9) Macdonell, p. 42.

(10) Padmanabh S. Jaini, *The Jaina Path of Purification*, Berkeley and Delhi 1979, p. 51.

(11) Colette Caillat, *Les expiations dans le rituel ancien des religieux jaina*, Paris 1965, p. 50. In contrast to the ancient tradition of the solitary ascetic, followed by the *jina-kappa*, the *thera-kappa* monks were not allowed to be alone, or normally even in pairs. Caillat does not relate this to the question of preserving the tradition; I owe this idea to a conversa-

tion with Will Johnson.

(12) Walpola Rahula, *History of Buddhism in Ceylon: the Anuradhapura Period*, Colombo, 1956, pp. 158—61.

(13) *Vinaya* I, 21.

(14) I, 140—1.

(15) Details in E.W. Adikaram, *Early History of Buddhism in Ceylon*, Migoda 1946, ch. 3.

(16) I, 13, 15.

(17) I, 14.

(18) *D.* III, 209—10. The same passage occurs at *D.* III, 117—8 and *M.* II, 243—4.

(19) *A.* II, 147.

(20) *Ye te bhikkhū bahussutā āgatāgamā dhammadharā vinayadharā mātikādharā te na sakkacca suttantaṃ paraṃ vācenti tesaṃ accayena chinnamūlako suttanto hoti apaṭisaraṇo.*

(21) *D.* II, 123—6.

(22) E.g., by Schopen in the article cited in note 35 below, p. 171, fn. 46.

(23) *Snip.* 302 and 306.

(24) *Dialogues of the Buddha, part* III, trans. T.W. Rhys Davids and C.A.F. Rhys Davids, London 1921, p. 90.

(25) T.W. Rhys Davids and H. Oldenberg, *Vinaya Texts, part I. (Sacred Books of the East* XIII), Oxford 1881.

(26) Rhys Davids and Oldenberg, p. xxxii.

(27) *Vin.* I, 43.

(28) *Vin.* IV, 7. This passage is not referred to by Rhys Davids and Oldenberg.

(29) *Vin.* III, 76.

(30) *Vin.* IV, 305.

(31) The text unhelpfully glosses *tiracchāna-vijjā* as "whatever is external, not beneficial" (*yaṃ kiñci bāhirakaṃ anatthasaṃhitaṃ*). If she learns it word by word (or line by line?) (*padena*) each word (or line) constitutes an offence; if syllable by syllable, each syllable. But there is no offence in learning *lekhaṃ, dhāraṇaṃ* or *guttatthāya parittaṃ*. Of these three exemptions, only the last is clear: it means "a [specific Buddhist] text recited for protection". The second Horner translates

as "what is memorised", but that makes no sense at all, for whatever she learns is presumably memorized. As it is next to *parittā* I assume it is also something like a protective spell, and so the equivalent of Sanskrit *dhāraṇī* (a word not attested in Pali, so that it is unclear whether one should emend to *dhāraṇiṃ* or just assume that the Pali equivalent is *dhāraṇā*). That leaves *lekhā*. My general interpretation is that what is forbidden in general is magic, but specific kinds of white magic are permitted.

(32) Rhys Davids and Oldenberg, p. xxxiii.

(33) *Ibid.*.

(34) Rahula, p. 158.

(35) G.Schopen, "The Phrase 'sa pṛthivīpradeśaś caityabhūto bhavet' in the Vajracchedikā: Notes on the Cult of the Book in Mahāyāna", *Indo-Iranian Journal* 17, 1975, pp. 147—81.

(36) Schopen, p. 169. As Schopen goes on to show, this evidence seems to refute the theory that early Mahāyāna is specifically associated with the cult of corporeal relics; if anything, it suggests the opposite.

(37) For instance in *Theravada Buddhism: a Social History from Ancient Benares to Modern Colombo*, London 1988, pp. 74—76; and in my forthcoming article on Buddhist identity in the French *Encyclopaedia Universalis*.